THE TWINS AND TOMMY JR.

DOROTHY WHITEHILL

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In an instant he was surrounded by the twins and Auntie Mogs (*See Page 76*)

THE TWINS AND TOMMY JUNIOR

BY

DOROTHY WHITEHILL

ILLUSTRATED BY

THELMA GOOCH

BARSE & HOPKINS

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The Twins and Tommy Junior

CHAPTER I

THE TWINS GRADUATE

"THE Page twins."

Miss Hull, principal of Hilltop School, spoke the words with something of a caress, and the girls who filled the big ballroom, so called because it still retained its old world splendor, smiled in sympathy.

Janet and Phyllis Page left their seats on the right of the platform, and went forward together to receive their diplomas. They closely resembled two butterflies in their white dresses. Their soft brown hair was piled high on their well-shaped little heads which they carried high on this, the most important day of their lives.

A sigh, audible in the hush of the big room, told more plainly than words, the regret that the school felt to lose "The Twins."

Janet received her diploma first and smiled gravely up at Miss Hull. There were reverence,

devotion and a world of loyalty in that smile. Then Phyllis took hers and it was as though Janet's smile was echoed.

In the three years that the Twins had been at Hilltop they had lost nothing of the remarkable likeness that had so confused their classmates. Only the discerning few could tell them apart at a moment's notice.

Miss Hull returned their smile, and as she looked into the two pairs of wistful brown eyes before her, she was forced to admit to herself that she did not know which was which. She devoutly hoped that she had given them their own diplomas. It was a point of pride with the faculty of Hilltop to be able to tell the Twins apart, and Miss Hull did not want to admit on this, their last day, that she was baffled after three years of close contact by their extraordinary likeness.

The Twins, however, knew that she was completely confused, for she had handed Janet Phyllis's diploma, and Phyllis Janet's, so when they returned to their seats beside Daphne Hillis and Sally Ladd, they very quietly exchanged them. Miss Hull was in the midst of her farewell speech, but the exchange did not escape her. She stopped in the middle of a sentence, and laughed.

"I do declare," she said in her delightful drawl, "I have confused the Twins again. Well I am not surprised. The first day I saw them standing side by side in the doorway of my office, I said to myself, 'I shall never be able to tell those children apart'—so you see I am only living up to my own prophesy."

The girls all laughed appreciatively.

Miss Hull finished her little speech, and as the Twins had been the last to receive their diplomas, the ceremony was over, and the seniors stood in line to receive the congratulations of their friends.

There were seven girls in the class. They were the same who had been together from their sophomore year. Many girls had joined the class since that time, only to be dropped or to leave before graduating. It seemed that a kindly fate had decreed that only the seven should receive diplomas together.

On one side of the flower-laden platform stood "The Quartet," Sally, Daphne and the Twins; and on the other, "The Trio," Gladys, Prue, and Ann.

The school had affectionately called them by these titles ever since the Twins' first year. Hilltop was proud of their friendships; proud of The

Trio because—well one couldn't help being proud of the bubbling Gladys, the irrepressible Ann, and the whimsical Prue. They were proud of Sally because she was Sally, and because she had introduced them to Aunt Jane's Poll Parrot, that wonderful though mythical bird. They adored Daphne for her radiant beauty, and honored her because she never failed to live up to it, and was, therefore, worthy of their homage.

But the Twins! It was too difficult even to attempt a description of Hilltop's regard for the Twins. They simply were *the* Twins! True, the Hilltop could have boasted of another pair of twins, the Red Twins, but somehow they did not consider that they were worth boasting about. They contented themselves with showing a wholesome affection, of which pride had no small part, for Janet and Phyllis, and were rewarded by the love and loyalty which they gave in return.

"I declare you children just look beautiful!" exclaimed the dark-haired Poppy, now a very grown-up alumna, as she came up to the platform and kissed the girls. Madge was with her. They took much credit unto themselves for the success

of this particular class, for had they not petted and made much of it and directed it in the way it should go?

"They aren't children, Poppy," Madge protested. "They are alumnæ now, think of it!"

"My Aunt Jane's Poll Parrot, so we are!" Sally exclaimed.

"I'd rather still be a senior," Phyllis said dolefully.

"So would I, it's beastly being through," Janet added fingering her diploma.

Daphne nodded. Her eyes were swimming in tears.

The platform was suddenly crowded. It was another one of Hilltop's odd customs that the girls had a chance to speak to the graduates before the visitors.

They all tried to say how glad and how sorry they were in one breath, and the graduates nodded in understanding.

Then a bell rang, and the school marched out, and the visitors who had been talking to the faculty and Miss Hull, came up to the platform to offer their congratulations.

Of all the relatives that surrounded the girls in

a buzz of admiration, Miss Carter, the Twin's aunt, was by far the most popular. All the class knew her and loved her as Auntie Mogs.

Next in favor was Ann's uncle, Major Harrison, but that stern old soldier had no eyes for any one but Janet.

"Well, little lady, I am overcome. You have grown up in the twinkling of an eye," he said bending over her hand in stately fashion.

Janet smiled back at him. "No indeed I haven't, Major. Shall I tell you a secret?"

"It would be an honor." The Major bent his back, usually as stiff as a ramrod, until his ear was on a level with Janet's mouth.

Janet smiled, a bewitching little smile, and whispered softly, "It's my hair, it's up, you see, for the first time."

The Major chuckled. "Well, well, if that's all it is, I am content. But what's this I hear about your not making us a visit this summer?" He turned and included Phyllis who was second only to Janet in his affection.

"It's dreadful isn't it?" she said, shaking her pretty head so that the big soft fan of hair toppled dangerously. "But you see we simply must go to Arizona just as quickly as possible, because

we have a real live, two-and-a-half year old nephew whom we have never seen."

"Just think of it!" Janet added excitedly, "Tommy Junior."

The Major sighed. "Well, we have no attraction that can equal that," he said seriously; "but I had hoped that the new terrier puppies would prove irresistible. But I reckon they have no chance beside a baby."

He looked reproachfully at Janet as though he resented her preference, and going over to Ann, he said the things that an uncle should say.

The happy hum and buzz of voices went on until the old clock discreetly reminded them by its silvery notes that it was six.

"My Aunt Jane's Poll Parrot!" Sally exclaimed. "The boys must be here by now."

"No, not yet," Daphne laughed a little self-consciously. "George said he would call me up as soon as they got to the Inn."

"Well, anyway it's time we were getting ready for dinner," Phyllis agreed; "for there are just loads of things to be done afterwards."

"Oh, the new seniors will attend to everything," Janet assured her. "Did you give them the cotillion favors, Taffy?"

"No, I forgot all about them," Daphne replied flustered. "I'll see that Bess gets them before dinner."

"Poor old Taffy," Prue teased in her slow, drawling voice that was so like Daphne's own, except for her marked Southern accent; "her head is in the clouds."

"And her pretty pink ear is getting flappier every second waiting for the sound of the silvery telephone bell," Gladys added.

Daphne's starry blue eyes had a distant dreamy look in their bright depths. Only Janet, who knew her better than any of the others, knew that she was busy wondering just what she was going to do with Chuck Vincent and George Cutler, her two most devoted admirers, when they met; but Janet did not tell even Daphne what she guessed.

The first move was made, and the girls carried away their own special relatives to their rooms, there to chat until the gong sounded for dinner.

Daphne knocked on the Twins' door, where with Auntie Mogs they were going over and over the plans for their trip West.

"Come in!" Phyllis called.

Daphne poked her head in the door. "They

are here," she announced. "*Chuck* called me up from the station."

The Twins laughed, Phyllis delightedly. "Good for Chuck, here's one time that he got ahead of George anyway!"

"Telephone, Miss Hillis," a trim maid who had come softly down the hall, spoke in Daphne's ear.

"Good gracious! What again?" Daphne exclaimed and the rest laughed.

"Yass 'um, peers like you was mighty pop'lar this evenin'," the maid replied grinning so that she showed all her perfect white teeth.

"Run along, Taffy," Phyllis urged; "don't keep him waiting."

"Give my love to George," Janet called after her as she ran down the hall.

After that, the telephone kept up an insistant ringing. Peter wanted Janet, Eustace Blake wanted Sally. The Dabney's, as might have been expected, called up together, and asked for the Trio, and last of all, Harry Waters, who apparently congratulated himself on his tact, wanted to speak to the Twins.

As they left to talk to him, Auntie Mogs watched them go with a curious expression in her eyes.

It had not escaped her notice that Phyllis was the only one of the girls who had not been called to the telephone alone, and she wondered. She would not have congratulated Harry on his display of tact.

She reversed her opinion a little later, however, when gigantic boxes began to arrive. Peter Gibbs and Harry had carefully discussed the problem of flowers, for the Twins found themselves in possession of like boxes.

"Oh what beauties!" Janet opened hers first and displayed several dozen Jack roses.

"Oh, Jan, aren't they lovely!" Phyllis exclaimed. "I'm afraid to take the lid off my box for fear mine are not just like them." But there was no need to fear, for even Harry had understood that the Twins must have the same sort of flowers.

"To Phyllis with congratulations from her friend Harry Waters," Phyllis read the card that was tied to one exquisite bud and smiled.

"Bless Harry's heart," she said, "he really is a dear!" And she promptly forgot him in the very act of burying her nose in his roses. She might not have been so thoughtless had she known that Harry had torn up not less than eight cards

with "to my favorite Twin" and similar sentiments written on them.

"Peter says, 'To Janet, Princess of the Enchanted Kingdom, from one of her humblest admirers.' " Janet flushed happily as she read her card. Peter had not called her Princess for a long time, and she was genuinely pleased that he had not forgotten their old game of pretend.

She might have paused too, to reflect, had she known, that the sensible Peter had torn up a card on which was written "To Janet, Princess of the Enchanted Kingdom and of my heart."

But there was no chance for such a discovery. Sally and Daphne burst in upon them and displayed roses identical to their own. Apparently there had been much thought lavished on this all-important subject.

"Taffy has another box too, just like these," Sally exclaimed, "of course one bunch is from Chuck and one from George."

"Why Daphne, what a mighty question to have to settle," Auntie Mogs teased. "Whose are you going to carry?"

"H'm," Sally looked very wise; "I thought of that too, Auntie Mogs, so I asked Aunt Jane's Poll Parrot and, you know that bird never fails

me, behold the answer!" She held up two cards. "I settled it by the simple device of confiscating both cards and mixing up the flowers. Now Taffy can truthfully say that she does not know whose she is carrying."

"Or she can tell each one that she is carrying his," Phyllis suggested with an impish twinkle in her eye.

Daphne smiled serenely. "You know, Phyl, that's not a bad idea," she drawled, and Auntie Mogs held up her hands in horror.

"Taffy, Taffy, what an outrageous idea!" she exclaimed. "You children are growing up much too fast for me."

The gong for dinner interrupted her.

"There," she said with a little smile, "that is all that saves you from a severe lecture on the sins of flirting. And Taffy, my dear, it really is a sin," she added seriously as they left the room behind the others.

Daphne nodded in solemn understanding.

CHAPTER II

THE SENIOR DANCE

THE alumnæ was a very important part of the workings of Hilltop. The wise Miss Hull did not want the girls, who so regretfully received their diplomas year after year, to feel that they had no further part in the school life, so it was the custom each year for the class of the year before and the sister class of the graduates, who were the year before that, to be invited to the Senior Dance.

So it happened that from all parts of the country girls came in groups with their chaperones, and met their attendant swains who stayed at the little Inn in the village, while the school took care of as many of the alumnæ as possible. The rest received the hospitality of the neighborhood, for Miss Hull had made Hilltop an important factor of the countryside, and hardly a big place for miles around but boasted a one-time pupil. At

graduation time they all with one accord opened their doors and entertained in true Southern style.

At eight o'clock the carriages began to arrive. Some were merry with laughing groups, others bore sedate newly-married couples, very self-conscious and very proud.

The seniors waited in their own sanctum sanctorum, a cozy room above the big colonial doorway. The balcony outside the window commanded a view of the broad sweeping driveway that led up from the foot of the hill.

"Jan," Phyllis said softly, "do you remember the night we stood here with Poppy and Madge and watched for Sally's carriage?"

"Of course, that was the very first night of our very first day at Hilltop."

"Do you hear that?" Ann demanded. "They were here with Poppy and Madge forsooth, but they seem to have forgotten our very existence!"

"Nonsense," Phyllis protested. "I am so used to thinking of us all being together, that I didn't think it necessary to mention you particularly. Of course you were here too, as you always were at moments of great importance."

"I thank you," Sally bowed low. "So does my Aunt Jane's Poll Parrot thank you. In

fact we have never felt so important before."

"What large outlooks we will have through life, if we go on looking at things in threes and fours and sevens," Prue said musingly.

"And mostly in sevens at that," Gladys added softly.

"My children this is a very solemn occasion," Sally announced. "It may be the last time we seven stand here together as comrades, tried and true." Sally had just finished "The Three Musketeers," and her voice rose to a dramatic pitch: "I want to say something worthy of the occasion, but—but"—she stopped and looked at the rest appealingly.

"I know," Daphne said in a muffled voice. "You've made me all chokey too."

There was silence as the steady stream of carriages and motors crunched on the gravel below.

"Ann if you put your arm around me, I shall weep," Gladys tried to laugh but failed.

There was a sorrowful little sniff that went all around the circle, and then Janet said heroically, "Sally's Aunt Jane's Poll Parrot, I know my nose is red!"

The laughter that followed ended in an exclamation from Daphne:

"Here they come!"

The rest looked over her shoulder and saw a big hay wagon seemingly filled with white shirt fronts, approaching at a lively pace.

"Lets say good-by here and now," Sally said hurriedly. "It will make it a whole lot easier to-morrow."

"Quite right, can't have any affecting scenes in public, it wouldn't do," Janet agreed and put her hand over Sally's. The rest put theirs, one on top of the other, and Sally said very seriously:

"I swear that the bond of friendship that has joined us together for three happy years"—she gulped a little as the rest repeated the words after her—"shall continue through the rest of our lives and that wherever we are, if any one of us needs help, all the rest shall without a second's hesitation go to her aid. And now 'until we meet again.'"

When they had all said every word of it, they locked hands firmly and a sigh followed the last word which might have ended in tears, had not a hearty shout from the porch below reminded them that this was a happy occasion and that their guests had arrived.

It was not long before the dance was in full

And now until we meet again

sway and the nymphs and cupids on the ballroom ceiling seemed to smile at the fluttering happy dancers. The class wore white and were easily separated from the visitors as they whirled by in the arms of their black-coated partners.

"I don't see why girls don't always wear white," Peter said to Janet, as they waited and clapped for an encore to the first dance. "It's much the nicest color there is."

"Why, Peter Gibbs, and you a last year's graduate from a famous school of technology! Don't you know white isn't a color at all?"

"I stand corrected, oh Princess of—" Peter paused just the fraction of a minute, then he went on lightly "my heart. But if it isn't a color, just what is it?"

"Sir Peter, do you question the statements of royalty?" Janet asked in a terrible voice. "Off with his head!"

Peter laughed and as if to show Janet how very helpless she was, he swung her off her feet and as the music started, he continued to dance with her suspended in mid-air.

"Nonsense!" he said in her ear; "you see you're only a pack of cards."

Janet almost stopped in her amazement.

"Why, Peter, do you know 'Alice in Wonderland' too?" she demanded.

"I know your copy of it in the Enchanted Kingdom," he told her. "I found an autumn leaf that you had left in it as a marker one day."

Janet sighed contentedly. "Tell me about the Kingdom, Peter. Are there any new books?"

Phyllis had the second dance of the evening with Chuck. She had managed to lumber through the first with Harry Waters, and it was a delightful change to find herself floating smoothly over the floor in Chuck's guiding arms.

Harry had improved in many astonishing ways, but dancing was still an undeveloped accomplishment.

"Chuck, how well you dance! But you look like a thunder cloud; what's the matter?" Phyllis smiled up at her good-looking partner who did indeed in some respects resemble a cloud of thunder.

Chuck's brow smoothed and he smiled. "Phyl, you're a wonder to put up with me, but then you always did understand a fellow. And of course you know what's the matter."

He found George Cutler's back in the throng of dances and glared at it so hard, it seemed as

though his shoulder blades must wriggle in protest.

Phyllis followed his glance and laughed her merry little laugh. "Oh Chuck, I'd like to shake you!" she said earnestly.

"Why, what have I done?" Chuck looked the picture of injured innocence.

"You haven't *done* anything, that's the trouble. You just let George have the first dance with Taffy and fill her program up with his name without saying a word, and of course George is laughing at you, and Taffy is probably awfully hurt."

This last was pure invention on Phyllis' part, but it impressed Chuck.

"I hope she is," he said doggedly. "The very least Daphne could have done was not to have invited me at all. She knew just how she was going to treat me all along."

"Oh, Chuck, I think I shall *have* to shake you!" Phyllis laughed heartlessly, and Chuck grinned.

"Go ahead," he said, "I think I'd like it."

"No, it wouldn't do you a bit of good," Phyllis told him.

"Then tell me what to do about Taffy," Chuck pleaded. "Phyl, do you honestly believe she is engaged to George?"

"Of course I don't, silly!"

"Sure?"

"Positive."

"Then tell me what to do. I'll do anything you tell me." Chuck sounded quite desperate, and it was not to be wondered at after even a fleeting glance at the radiant Daphne.

Her shimmering white dress seemed to be a soft cloud that acted as a frame for her rich gold hair. Her eyes were like twin stars of cerulean blue. Excitement made them shine and brought a soft shell pink to her cheeks.

She had seen Chuck over George's shoulder, talking earnestly to Phyllis and her mouth puckered into a tiny pout. She was a little put out with Chuck.

George saw the pout and made haste to try to expel it in his own way. He was a good-looking boy with a mass of dark hair, brown eyes, broad shoulders, and more than his share of conceit.

"Taffy, cut all those dances with the Dabneys, and give them to me. I can't bear to have you dance with any one else," he pleaded, but Daphne detected a note of assurance in his voice. Her eyes still followed Chuck's well-shaped back as it

guided Phyllis ever so gently through the maze of dancers.

"Don't be silly," she said crossly. "I don't cut dances."

"Not even for me?"

"Certainly not. Why should I choose to break a rule just for you?"

"Because I ask it."

Daphne's little low chuckle that was always tantalizing was doubly so as an answer to such a tender speech. George did not enjoy being laughed at.

"Oh well, if that's the way you feel about it," he said, a little nonplussed.

The music stopped. Daphne consulted her program and found she had the next dance with Chuck.

She danced that dance in surprise. She had expected reproaches and instead she received the gayest compliments. Chuck had been well instructed. His manner had the desired effect on Daphne. It left her quite stunned and a little mortified.

"And I think she deserves it," Phyllis said to herself as she hopped about the room in an at-

tempt to escape the large and exceedingly awkward feet of the youngest Dabney.

Janet, across the room, was having somewhat the same trouble with his older brother. She hopped and she bumped, and Lee Dabney plowed into the sea of dancers somewhat the same way that a cutter plows through high waves.

"My Aunt Jane's Poll Parrot!" Sally exclaimed, as Janet propelled ever onwards collided with her in the center of the room.

"I beg your pardon," Lee said stiffly, glaring at his brother who was Sally's partner.

"My fault too," the elder Dabney admitted.

Janet and Sally exchanged agonized glances, and Janet put her trembling fingers up to her hair.

Phyllis saw it and steered her partner towards the group. She felt rather than knew what was going to happen. The music stopped and almost as though it were a conjurer's trick, Janet's hair tumbled down her back.

It wasn't as though it were just a few ends that could be hurriedly tucked up, it was a mass of long brown hair and it rippled down Janet's shrinking back to her waist. Meanwhile hairpins showered about the floor.

Phyllis left her partner and was just in time to see Janet leave the room the center of much admiration and delighted laughter. The younger Dabney never knew just what happened, but he realized he was alone on the floor, for at the same time Phyllis disappeared.

"Which Twin was it?" was the next question. No one could answer it except Sally, and she wouldn't, or Daphne—but Daphne was otherwise occupied at that moment.

"Let me have your card," Chuck said as the music stopped.

Daphne surrendered it to him wonderingly.

Without a word of explanation he drew a line through four of the G. C's and scribbled Chuck above them. Then he pocketed the card with an assurance that he was far from feeling.

"What are you doing, Chuck?" Daphne asked meekly.

"I'll take care of your card for you," Chuck replied in a lordly manner. "You don't mind, do you, Taffy?"

"Well, quite honestly, Chuck, I don't," Daphne told him, blushing a little.

A minute later Chuck looked around the room to find Phyllis. He wanted to signal to her that it

was all right. But neither Janet nor Phyllis were in the room.

"Phyl, you're an angel!" Janet was saying at that moment.

"Don't see why," Phyllis laughed, "if any one asks me whose hair fell down, I shall simply say 'the Page Twins' and you do the same."

They linked arms and strolled back into the ballroom. There was an instant's hush as they entered, and then the Major who was standing near the door, talking to Auntie Mogs, bowed low and announced in a clear voice, "The Page Twins!"

It was the climax to the evening and to the Twins' school life. Three years before, Madge had announced them in much the same way at that very door. And as they made their first, so they made their final appearance—together.

CHAPTER III

THE VERY LAST DAY

THERE is no knowing how long Janet and Phyllis might have slept, had it not been for Auntie Mogs' knock on their door a little after nine o'clock next morning.

"Come in," Phyllis called drowsily.

"Good-morning, my dears," Auntie Mogs greeted them as she pulled back the curtain and let in a flood of golden sunshine.

"What lazy bones you are! Everybody is up and out, and I do believe you are still half asleep, both of you."

"We are," Janet and Phyllis agreed readily.

"Very well then, I shall not tell you the splendid news I have," Auntie Mogs teased. "It might waken you."

Janet and Phyllis bounded out of bed.

"Tell us," they demanded as they perched, one on either arm of the chair Auntie Mogs had taken.

She kissed them both and began: "This morning while you were still in bed, I went for a walk with Mrs. Hillis and Mrs. Ladd. When we returned there was a wire waiting for Mrs. Hillis from her husband, saying that there would be a special car attached to the express at four o'clock to-day.

"There, what do you think of that, for of course she has asked us to share it with her!"

Mr. Hillis was an official of the road, but this was a treat that no one, not even Daphne, had anticipated.

"I heard her asking Chuck and Peter and Eustace and Harry to have dinner with us to-night," Auntie Mogs continued with a quiet little smile.

"A private car,—my word but aren't we swell!" Phyllis exclaimed.

"Darling, do you suppose Mr. Hillis would mind sending it down to Arizona, two weeks from now?" Janet inquired.

Auntie Mogs laughed, "I think he would, my dear. You see he is apt to want it himself."

"Too bad," Janet mused. "I should have loved to have arrived in Loophole in a private car."

"Little snob!" Phyllis teased.

There was a loud rap at the door, and Sally and Daphne entered in response to Janet's "come in."

"Oh, Taffy, your adorable father!" Phyllis exclaimed.

Janet laughed. "Phyl has just heard about the private car," she explained.

"It *is* rather a nice surprise," Daphne drawled. "I didn't think father could arrange for one."

"My Aunt Jane's Poll Parrot, aren't you dressed yet?" Sally exclaimed, changing the subject abruptly. "It's nearly time to give our picture to Miss Hull."

The Twins suddenly remembered, and hurrying into bath-robes, dashed down the hall, and a moment later they were heard splashing in their tubs.

The presentation of the class picture to Miss Hull was a yearly affair. Each class had their picture taken, either in their favorite spot on the grounds or in the ballroom. It was framed and on the morning of the last day the class took it to Miss Hull, who always waited for them in her own particular room, and there the last good-byes were said.

This particular class had diverged a little from the old established custom, and instead of an ordinary picture they had gone, during their Easter vacation which they had all spent in New York, to a certain photographer who made a specialty of silhouettes.

"Oh dear, I do hope Miss Hull will like it!" Ann said as they waited for a response to their knock.

"Of course she will," Sally, who as president of the class was carrying the picture, replied.

"Sure too," Daphne added. "It's certainly better than that grinning group of the last year's class."

"Come in," Miss Hull's voice called, and Phyllis pushed open the door.

"And how are my graduates this morning?"

"I think we all feel a little tearful," Sally replied. "It's sort of awful to realize that this is our very last day."

"I quite agree with you," Miss Hull smiled; "but you must not think of that part of it. What I want you to take away with you, to remember always, is the thought that Hilltop will never forget you. As a class you have lived up to our highest standards, and as individuals you have set

examples that I hope the next class will strive to imitate."

The girls flushed happily. This was praise. This was worth all the effort they had made, and was worthy of a greater effort in the future.

"I don't need to tell you that I hope you will always live up to Hilltop's expectations for you, for I know you will. And now let me see the picture."

Sally presented the box. It was a long narrow one, and was tied with the Hilltop colors.

Miss Hull looked at it curiously. This was not the ordinary white tissue, paper-covered square frame that she had received year after year.

"Why girls, I'm quite excited!" she said as she untied the ribbon.

The girls waited breathless. Off came the cover, and Miss Hull saw to her delight, a long black frame separated into seven compartments, making seven oval frames. In the center of each was a clever silhouette of each of the girls, with her signature written below it.

"Oh, oh, oh! I declare, this is just the loveliest surprise I ever had. Girls, how did you ever think of anything so delightful? Why, I never dreamed of anything so quaint!"

There was no mistaking her genuine pleasure and the girls drew relieved breaths.

"We thought it fitted Hilltop and the old miniatures in this room better than a group picture. That is the Twins did," Ann explained, anxious to give credit where credit was due.

"So it was my Twins that thought of it, was it?" Miss Hull held out her hand to Janet and Phyllis. "I might have known it."

"But it was Taffy and Sally who first suggested that we have something new," Janet hastened to explain.

"And the Trio designed the frame," Phyllis added.

"In fact, we all had a finger in the pie," said Daphne.

"You darling children, for you are still children, in spite of your grown-up airs, I don't want you to go. I can't bear to think of Hilltop without you!" Miss Hull blinked back the tears and smiled. "Run along now, it's high time we were getting ready for the picnic. It's a glorious day for it."

The girls left a little dejectedly, but pride in the success of their gift soon dispelled the gloom.

"Say what you please," said Gladys, "but I'll bet Miss Hull didn't cry over last year's seniors."

"And I bet she won't cry over next year's either," Ann added.

"Don't be vindictive children," Prue admonished severely.

Janet danced a skittish little dance down the corridor. "I gloat, hear me!" she quoted from her beloved "Stalky & Co."

"There goes the wagon with the luncheon baskets." Phyllis pointed out of the window to the farm cart that was filled with hampers. "It must be 'most time to go."

They hurried out of the front door to find most of the guests assembled on the broad steps.

"You all took a long time over that picture," Poppy complained. "We're about starved to death."

"Too bad, Poppy, but we are here now, so let's start," Sally replied. "Come on, Eustace, we'll head the way."

The rest followed in groups of twos and threes, and Sally, setting a lively pace, led them over the hill to a little glen that was carpeted with violets and livened by the busy gurgling of a little brook.

The year at Hilltop always ended in this pretty spot.

They had a charming picnic. At the end of the

meal Miss Hull exhibited the class picture, and a murmur of "Why didn't *we* think of that?" came from the old girls.

At last the time came for the final good-byes. Sally, Daphne, and the Twins were the first to leave with their party, for they were taking the train north.

"We've said good-by once," Sally reminded them as they stood on the porch surrounded by suitcases.

"Oh, Prue, you will write, won't you?" Janet sniffed, and Prue nodded silently.

Peter saw the signs of tears and exclaimed hurriedly; "By Jove it's getting late, here come the carriages; we haven't a minute to spare." And with Chuck's assistance he bundled them into the waiting carriages.

They had only time to wave hasty farewells.

At the station, which was very hot and dusty, they found they had a good half-hour to wait. Peter and Chuck took the blame, but were careful to explain that it was all Janet's fault.

"We couldn't have her start weeping, you see, Mrs. Hillis, or there would have been no stopping her."

"And then she would have wept all over Mr.

Hillis' private car," Chuck went on; "we couldn't have had that, you know."

This made everybody laugh, including Janet, and they continued to laugh until the arrival of the Express, when their laughter was changed to exclamations of delight over the luxurious private car.

The boys went to their berths, only long enough to deposit their bags, and then returned to find the girls comfortably seated on the rear platform, for their's was the last car of the train.

The afternoon passed and they had a splendid dinner. In the late evening as the train thundered through the countryside, Janet, looking up at the bright stars above them, voiced the thought that was in every mind.

"What a perfect ending to the very last day!" she said softly.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST STAGE OF THE JOURNEY

PHŒNIX, white and dusty under the glare of the noonday sun, came into sight as the train slowed to a halt.

The Twins saw the first houses and hurried to the platform as though their haste would of necessity speed their arrival.

"What are we so excited about?" Phyllis wondered, "we've a long way to go before we see Tommy Junior."

"I know, but I have a sort of a feeling that we may see some one we know," Janet replied.

"Do you think Mr. Savage will be here, dear?" Auntie Mogs inquired.

The porter joined them. "You all bound for Loophole?" he inquired with a worried frown on his usually smiling face.

"Yes, we will wait here for our train," Auntie Mogs told him. "It is due before very long."

"Yass 'um, it's due all right, but it ain't agoin' to get here," he informed them.

"But why not?" Auntie Mogs inquired.

"Kase there's been a big washout down the road, and dey ain't no trains runnin' nohow."

"Oh dear, are you quite sure?" was all Auntie Mogs could say.

"I sure is, we done get word as we come into de yards. And now if you all will let me open up dis yere door, you can be getting out."

"Our arrivals at Phoenix are fated to be exciting," Phyllis was apparently delighted at the turn of events.

The porter opened the door, and for a minute the girls blinked, the sun was so glaring after the dark of the aisle. The train stopped and Janet was the first to jump off.

"What did I tell you?" she shouted gleefully. "There's Rusty, and oh, do look, English is with him!"

"Well now, here we are, first off the train, just as I said," Rusty was beside her in three long strides, and was squeezing her hand in his big paw.

English Kedgeree didn't have much to say

audibly, but his eyes shone as he held out his hand to Phyllis, and then turned to help Auntie Mogs down from the high step.

It was a new and strange English from the cow-puncher whom they had known two years ago. Gone were the leather chaps and the broad sombrero, the dusty brown boots, and the long snake-skin whip that had always dangled from his wrist. Instead there stood a tall well-groomed man in a well-fitting, though somewhat shabby tweed suit, a soft hat on his head and, as Janet noted mentally, even a white collar and tie. She sighed in disappointment, and after she had said, "How do you do," she turned back to Rusty, who was in every way unchanged.

Phyllis, on the contrary, looked and looked again. Here was quite the handsomest man she had ever seen.

"Do you know which is which?" she asked smiling up at him, and she was unreasonably delighted and relieved when he said, "Rather! You are Miss Phyllis."

"Is it true that there is a washout on the road?" Auntie Mogs inquired after she had told both men how delighted she was to see them again, and inquired for Tom and Daisy and the baby.

"There sure is," Rusty replied. "There's no telling how long it will be before the trains run again."

"But that need not distress you, Miss Carter," English hastened to say. "Tom's car is at Savage's, and I am going to drive you home tomorrow."

"And that means that you will have to come over to my shack for the night," Rusty was as pleased as a child.

"Oh good!" Janet exclaimed. "Just as it was before. I told you something nice was going to happen," she turned to her aunt and Phyllis.

"But how are we going to reach your ranch, Mr. Savage?" Auntie Mogs inquired.

"Guess how, little lady?" Rusty turned to Janet.

"Drive behind your scrumptious team," Janet exclaimed.

Rusty chuckled, "Just that," he nodded. "The roads are too bad even for a fliver, so we have to depend on the horses. They are in a sorry state."

"Oh I say Rusty, don't start in by frightening your passengers," English protested.

"Shucks, you couldn't frighten the little lady."

"But the little lady has a sister and an aunt," English reminded him dryly; "and they can't be blamed for not enjoying the prospect of careening over the bad roads behind your fiery steeds."

"Nonsense!" Janet spoke sharply. "There's nothing to be afraid of."

English looked at her and then at Phyllis. There was no difficulty in telling them apart now. Janet's eyes were flashing, while Phyllis' face had gone white and there was a worried look in her soft brown eyes.

English caught himself thinking that he admired a girl who had sense enough to be timid. Then he remembered that Janet had always been his pet. But where one admires pluck and daring in a fourteen-year old girl, one prefers a becoming shyness in the maid of seventeen.

He walked over to Phyllis and took her arm. "I think old Rusty is talking big for the special benefit of that daring little sister of yours," he said. "There is really not the slightest cause for alarm."

"Thank you," Phyllis whispered, and she smiled frankly into the deep blue eyes that were gazing at her so steadily.

Janet saw at a glance just what was going

through English's head, and for a second she resented it.

She took her Twin's hand and squeezed it. "I'll protect you, Phyl, if the horses run away," she said.

Phyllis laughed. "Of course you will, darling, I'm really not a bit afraid."

"Come along, folks," Rusty waved a huge paw at them from the edge of the platform. He had stowed the bags under the seat of the big buckboard. His horses were tossing their heads and stamping the ground, in a fever to be off.

Janet went to their heads and they permitted her to stroke their velvet noses.

Phyllis trembled ever so slightly and looked appealingly at English. "You must think I'm a dreadful baby," she said as he helped her into the back seat.

English shook his head slowly and very deliberately rubbed his left arm just below the shoulder. "I have an ever-present reminder of your bravery," he said smiling. He was thinking of the night that the Mexicans had fired the outhouses, and Phyllis had driven into Loophole at record speed to bring a doctor for the wounded men.

Phyllis flushed. "Oh, that was nothing," she

protested. "Is your arm still stiff? I haven't forgotten the way you rode out to us and talked all the long way back as though you were not hurt at all. It was splendid."

While this conversation was taking place, English had helped Auntie Mogs into the carriage and tucked one of the thin dust robes around her. She looked down at him and smiled.

"I don't think any of us will ever forget that night, Mr. Kedgeree," she said. "But don't lets talk about it. I do hope nothing of the kind will occur this summer."

"No fear, the Mexs are as quiet as lambs," English assured her as he took his place beside her on the spacious seat. Phyllis sat on the other end with Auntie Mogs in the middle.

Janet was of course on the front seat beside Rusty, chattering like a magpie.

The horses started off, for all the world as though they were running away.

"Let's talk about Tommy Junior," English suggested smiling across Auntie Mogs at Phyllis.

CHAPTER V

ADOBE MUD

THE topic of conversation held many possibilities, and English showed an interest and familiarity with Tommy Junior surprising in a bachelor.

"And does he really know you?" Phyllis asked, incredulous. "After all he's such a wee mite."

"Of course he knows me, the young rascal," English sounded positively offended. "He calls me Ding. Tom and Daisy wouldn't believe it at first. Old Tom insisted that he called everything Ding, bread and butter and milk and all the rest, but I jolly soon proved to him that he was wrong."

"How did you do it?" Auntie Mogs inquired. She was heartily amused at English's air of pride.

"Simplest thing in the world," English replied. "He went on calling me Ding when he had learned to say everything else. You know the little beggar can say almost everything, and what he can't say he makes a try at anyway."

"Do you suppose he'll ever learn to say Phyllis?" Phyllis inquired eagerly.

"Rather," English assured her. "He does—" He stopped suddenly but whether intentionally or not Phyllis never knew, for at that minute the wagon, which up to this time had been bowling along regardless of ruts or stones, came to a sudden halt, a wheel on Phyllis' side seemed to slip quietly out of sight, and before any one was really aware of what was happening there was a squashy sound, and after the horses had come to a frightened stop and the rest had a chance to look, they found that Phyllis had fallen out and was at that moment lying buried in mud.

English was beside her in no time, and soon had her back in the wagon. She was a sorry sight, for there is nothing stickier under the sun than adobe mud in the Spring of the year.

"My darling child, are you hurt?" Auntie Mogs inquired, for Phyllis was speechless. She shook her head violently however, and English, always quick to understand, took a fresh handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped her mouth. She had fallen head first, and the mud had gotten into her eyes and mouth.

Rusty had all he could do to quiet the horses who were tossing and stamping, not understanding the reason for the weight to which they had suddenly become attached, and the more they pawed the deeper into the mud they got.

Janet for once in her life was frightened. Phyllis looked stiff, and so far she had not uttered a word.

"Oh Phyl, say something!" she pleaded as she leaned over from the front seat. "Auntie Mogs what is the matter?"

"Get me Rusty's water-bottle," English directed. "It's under the seat."

Janet dove for it. Auntie Mogs, always silent when there was anything to be done, hastily unscrewed the top. English wet his handkerchief and began to apply it.

"Gug," said Phyllis after a minute of violent face washing.

"Oh Phyl, why didn't you say so before?" Janet demanded with so much feeling that even Phyllis had to laugh, thereby cracking some of the mud that had hardened on her face.

"Dear child, don't swallow any of it," Auntie Mogs cautioned.

By now English had managed to unearth one of Phyllis' eyes, and out of it she looked balefully at her aunt.

"Don't?" she mumbled. "I've already swallowed half the road and I'll never taste anything but mud again."

One muddy hand went to her hair, it was caked hard. She looked at English, and a blush almost hot enough to melt it mantled her cheeks. It was hidden however, and English simply went on trying to discover the other eye.

Phyllis was embarrassed to tears, and at sight of the first one that trickled down her cheek making a crooked furrow, English stopped mopping and bent over her solicitously.

"Are you quite sure you are not hurt?" he inquired, and began feeling her arms and shoulders. He looked so ridiculously worried that suddenly Phyllis realized that it couldn't possibly matter to him how dreadful she looked, as long as she was unhurt, and a warm feeling of gratitude took the place of cold desolation.

In an instant her embarrassment had disappeared, and she laughed her own merry little laugh.

"Oh, English, you're such a lamb!" she said

impulsively and this time English did the blushing.

Meanwhile Rusty had been at the horses' heads trying to make them give the jerk that would pull the wagon free, but it was in vain that he tried. There was no moving that rear wheel; it was so embedded that the more the willing horses pulled the deeper it sank, and by now the floor of the wagon was even with the ground.

With every step, too, that Rusty took he went in almost to the tops of his boots. English, as soon as he had found Phyllis' other eye, and had a reassuring smile from the depth of them both, jumped out to help Rusty, but even their combined efforts were of no avail. The wagon absolutely refused to move.

The two men climbed back to their seats. Rusty scratched his head, and English tried to reassure Auntie Mogs.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Carter," he said. "Some one is sure to come along and pull us out before very long, and after all it is a beautiful day," he added rather lamely.

He and Rusty were both a good deal worried. It was not at all a sure thing that they would be discovered before the next morning, for the road

was not a main one and only led to the Savage ranch, and was seldom frequented.

"I'm not at all alarmed for myself," Auntie Mogs assured him, "but I should like to get Phyllis into some dry clothes."

"Don't worry about me, dearest," Phyllis protested. "Why this is probably doing me loads of good. You know people take mud baths from choice, though to be strictly honest, I don't understand just what fun they get out of it."

"Poor old Phyl, you do look a sight!" Janet teased. "I wish I could get ahold of my kodak."

Phyllis did not reply for several minutes, but when she did there was a suppressed chuckle in her voice.

"Oh, by the way, Mr. Rusty," she said, "I have a picture of Jan in my grip, that I am so anxious to show you. You won't let me forget it when we get to the ranch house will you?"

"Phyl Page, you haven't!" Janet exclaimed.

"Oh, but I have," Phyllis replied quietly.

"Oh, very well," Janet grew suddenly gay; "for that matter I have one of you *and* Harry."

Phyllis shook her head very slowly, and almost chanted her reply.

"But you haven't, my love. I took the precau-

tion to destroy it and the film, the day I did the packing."

"You wretch, you didn't really," Janet protested.

"Oh, but I did," Phyllis laughed. "So you see your threat is empty, but mine is full of danger. So you'd better stop talking of kodaks when I am clothed in mud."

Rusty and English had been interested listeners, but they could make nothing out of the conversation. At last English said:

"You might tell us all about it and let us judge; but before you begin, I am sure I am going to agree with your twin that you were a wretch to destroy your picture, Miss Phyllis."

Phyllis laughed. She liked the way English called her Miss, it was a sure sign that she was growing up.

"Oh, I've nothing to say," she replied airily, "as long as Jan keeps still."

"But Janet isn't going to keep still, she is going to tell," Janet announced dramatically for she had suddenly realized that a picture of her feeding a lamb from a baby's bottle with the aid of Peter Gibbs, would not appear strange to two men accustomed to saving cattle by the same expedient.

Phyllis realized it too late, and at the same time she knew that the picture of herself hauling her escort, the fat Harry Waters, out of the creek, with the turned-over canoe in the background, had lost none of its humor by the change of location. Thank goodness she had destroyed the picture!

"Go ahead and tell us, little lady," Rusty drawled, not because he was particularly interested, but because he wanted them all to keep their minds off the present predicament.

It was Janet who told the story. Of how she and Peter had been snapped from behind the stone wall, just as they were inducing the little black sheep to take a much-needed breakfast.

"But retribution followed fast," she continued, and went on to tell how that very afternoon she and Peter had had occasion to get a splendid picture of Phyllis, drenched and bedraggled leading the chattering Harry by the hand. The story lost nothing in the telling.

"Well, did you save the lamb?" Rusty inquired.

"Did you take a cold?" English asked.

"Yes," replied Janet.

"No," answered Phyllis.

Auntie Mogs laughed merrily. The questions

were characteristic of the two men. She opened her bag that she was carrying, and hunted in it for a few seconds. Then she selected an envelope, opened it, and drew out two pictures. She handed one to Rusty and one to English.

The Twins gasped. "Auntie Mogs!" they exclaimed together, "where did you get those?"

"Peter gave them to me. He thought it would be a pity for me not to have a set to show Tom. I think he rather feared that one or the other of you would find and destroy one, and so spoil the pair. Peter, as I have always said, has a very wise head for one so young."

"He's almost twenty," Janet said rather irrelevantly. The rest laughed.

As the two men looked at the pictures they realized that it was growing dark, for they had difficulty in seeing. The situation had to be faced, for it was unthinkable to consider staying where they were all night, and they were forced to give up the idea of help coming from either direction.

Phyllis unthinkingly brought matters to a climax, when she asked if there was any water.

"I am so beastly thirsty," she complained. "I feel as though I had swallowed all the mud in Arizona."

English turned the water bottle, not a very large one to be sure but always enough for Rusty's need, upside down. He had drained the last drop to wash Phyllis' face.

"That settles it," he said quietly. "I shall walk on to the ranch and get help."

"But you can't walk in this mud!" Phyllis protested. "And please I really don't need the water." She said the last with a little falter in her voice, for she was really thirsty, and the thought of a whole night without a drop was almost more than she could bear, but she determined not to let any one know how she was suffering.

"Good idea," Rusty was talking to English. "It's just possible that some of my boys may come out to look for us, but only possible, 'cause I told them that if I found the roads were too bad we'd put up in town for the night. I'd go," he added, "but I'd not get far with these boots."

He was wearing his riding boots with their heavy spurs and high heels, and the prospect of a five mile walk would have caused him a heartfelt groan.

Fortunately English had on ordinary shoes, but

Phyllis was sure that he would have insisted upon going, even had he been barefoot.

Just on the chance of being heard, they fired off their guns into the air but though they listened intently, there was no reply.

English jumped down from the high side of the wagon where the road was less muddy and started off. They watched him go silently. He turned to wave every few minutes until at last he was merged into the thickening dusk. To Phyllis, who felt responsible for his going, it looked as though he were being swallowed up.

They settled down to wait for his return.

CHAPTER VI

POOR PHYLLIS!

THE short twilight touched the hills with purple, and then, almost before they had perceived it, night had come. It would be difficult to say which of the three suffered the most keenly, for although Phyllis alone was in pain, Auntie Mogs and Janet suffered so in sympathy that their distress was almost as great. Rusty sat with his hands on his knees; there was no need to hold the horses, they were resigned to the new state of affairs. He looked straight before him, trying to peer ahead into the darkness. Janet and Auntie Mogs were frankly plunged in gloom, and it was left to poor Phyllis to keep up the spirits of the party. This was difficult when her mouth was so parched, but she struggled gamely.

The first hour passed. By the end of the second, they were in total blackness. Suddenly Phyllis looked up.

"Look," she pointed. A tiny star, brilliant against the blackness of the sky, seemed to smile down at her.

The rest followed her pointing finger. Auntie Mogs sighed, and Janet said, "Oh, only a star," and lapsed into silence again.

Poor Phyllis gave up in despair. She was suffering acutely, and there is no suffering like that of thirst, and she felt inclined to resent the others' silence. Suddenly she put her head down on Auntie Mogs' lap, and burst into tears. Rusty stirred uneasily. Janet said, "Oh, Phyl, dear please, I can't bear it," while Auntie Mogs stroked the quivering shoulders. Phyllis found tears some relief so continued to sob on.

"I'm all right," she managed to assure them, between sobs. "I like to cry because my tears are wet, and goodness knows they are the only wet thing about me."

Somehow Phyllis' sorry attempt at humor was too much for Janet. She put her head on Rusty's shoulder and howled. Rusty was so embarrassed that he could not find a word to say, and Janet's healthy sobs had the effect of paralyzing him, so that he sat perfectly rigid, without uttering a word.

"Janet, dear child, you must stop," Auntie Mogs spoke sharply. "It doesn't help Phyllis a bit for you to cry, and she needs all your courage as well as her own."

"I know I'm a perfect idiot," Janet stammered. "I could stand it lots better if I were the one that were suffering."

This was only the simple truth. Janet had a lion's courage, where pain was concerned. There was only one thing she could not stand, and that was to see her twin suffer.

Phyllis lifted her head from Auntie Mog's lap, and groped in the darkness until her hand rested on Janet's shoulder.

"Poor old Jan!" she said softly, though it cost her an effort to speak. "That's what you get for being a twin."

"Praise be!" They all jumped as Rusty exclaimed fervently.

"Oh, are they coming?" Auntie Mogs asked breathlessly.

But Rusty had heard nothing. Instead, he had seen the rim of the big yellow moon, peering above the mesa.

"I'm not aworrying about them coming, ma'am." He turned half way around in his seat,

but he took care to hold Janet's head on his shoulder by the simple expedient of placing his large hand firmly over her cheek. "It was the light I was worrying about, but here she comes, old lady moon."

Phyllis wanted to say that she'd always considered the moon an old gentleman, but when she opened her lips she found the words would not come. Every recollection she had ever had of people's dying of thirst rushed through her mind, and it was almost assuredly that she would have made up her mind that she was going to die too, had not the terrible silence, that moment, been broken by the welcome sound of the report of a gun.

Rusty jumped up from his seat, tumbling Janet's head unceremoniously from his shoulder. He whipped out his gun, and answered by a volley of shots.

Meantime, the moon was steadily rising. A great yellow disk that seemed to pick out the corners of the darkness, and throw into sharp silhouette the clumps of cacti, giving them a semblance to ghosts.

They listened in tense silence, and heard the welcome thud of approaching horses' hoofs.

"That's the whole outfit, I reckon," Rusty exclaimed. "Now you just cheer up, little lady. We'll soon have you and your twin safe and snug in bed."

"I can see them!" Janet cried excitedly.

A single horseman appeared for a moment, against the background of the yellow moon, and then dipped down into the night again, as he galloped towards them. He was followed by a dozen others, riding close together. The first rider was English, and in an incredibly short time he had reined in his horse beside the carriage. In after life it is probable that Phyllis welcomed many sights, but she never attained again the solemn thankfulness with which she received the water bottle that English held out to her.

"Don't swallow the first few mouthfuls," he warned her, and Phyllis although her throat was parched, meekly obeyed him. She was almost afraid to try to speak, but a little conventional, "thank you" slipped out before she thought, and she sighed with relief at the sound of her own voice.

The entire Savage ranch had ridden to the rescue, and it was the work of a few minutes to haul the wagon from the mud. The startled horses

broke into a gallop, and the cowmen whooped and yelled as they followed alongside. They fairly ate up the five miles. To Auntie Mogs, it was, by far, the most terrifying part of the journey. Phyllis didn't care one way or another, except that the faster they went, the sooner she would reach more water. Janet alone thoroughly enjoyed it, and had Auntie Mogs known that for a level stretch of the road Janet was doing the driving, it is very probable that she would have fainted.

The lights of the ranch house twinkled brightly, and Miss Agatha's commanding presence could be felt before it was seen. At sight of the low buildings, snuggling under the shadow of the hills, one sensed the comfort of a plentiful meal, ready hospitality, and best of all beds. Rusty drew up at the porch, with a flourish.

The door opened, and in a flood of lamplight stood Miss Agatha. To the girls and Auntie Mogs she seemed bigger than ever, and her voice boomed out with something of the resonance of a horn.

"Well now, here's a pretty kettle of fish! Come right in this minute," she called heartily.

English, who had ridden on ahead of them, was

waiting to help them out. Phyllis knew she was feeling better, because she was suddenly conscious of the sight she must present, muddy and very bedraggled.

"Come right in, you poor lamb! Whatever's the matter with you? English was in such a powerful hurry that he didn't have time to tell me, and I never ask a busy man questions."

"Right you are, Miss Agatha," English laughed. "And I bet you're the only woman in the world that doesn't."

Miss Agatha loved a compliment, and, if she might have been said to have smiled before, she beamed now.

"Miss Phyllis fell into the mud, when the wheels sank," English went on to explain, as Miss Agatha shook hands with Auntie Mogs and Janet.

"What she wants most in the world is probably a tub," English finished, and then without another word, dropped down off the porch, and disappeared in the direction of the corral.

"Shucks," Miss Agatha exclaimed, "what she wants is food," and she barged ahead towards the dining room.

But Phyllis was inclined to agree with English.

She certainly wanted a bath more than anything else, at that moment.

Nothing daunted Miss Agatha. In a surprisingly short time, she had a wooden washtub completely surrounded by towels, in the center of the Twins' room, for a ranch is primitive, but Phyllis never welcomed the most luxurious porcelain tub as she welcomed that wooden one.

Although Auntie Mogs and Janet would have liked to stay with Phyllis, Miss Agatha insisted upon their coming in to dinner, and when Miss Agatha insisted, who was there in the world to say her nay?

The last time they had been at the Savage ranch house, the men had been away at a roundup, and the long table had been deserted, but to-night their entrance was greeted by the clatter of many knives and forks.

Janet had been a tradition at the Savage ranch, since her last visit, so that the men, although they had never met her, felt that they were greeting an old friend.

The meal progressed merrily. Janet and Auntie Mogs were hungry, and did full justice to the chicken fricassee that served only as a background to Miss Agatha's celebrated dumplings.

"Sakes alive, that child must have drowned!" Miss Agatha exclaimed, as she was serving the second liberal helping.

Janet jumped up guiltily. "I'll go and see," she said, but Auntie Mogs was before her.

"No, dear, you sit still. I'll go and call her," she insisted.

She found Phyllis fully dressed, but with her hair hanging over her shoulder on a towel.

"I simply had to wash my head, Auntie Mogs, it was so dirty," she explained; "and now I can't go in to dinner until it dries."

"I'll go and bring you some, dear," Auntie Mogs said, but when she went back in the dining room, neither Miss Agatha nor any of the men would hear of Phyllis having her dinner in solitary state. They insisted that she come to the table, and when she appeared, a few minutes later, she was greeted with the frankest admiration.

Phyllis was one of the few girls who looked well with her hair wet, and English, looking at her, wondered for perhaps the hundredth time that day how he had ever preferred the more boisterous Janet.

CHAPTER VII

TOMMY JUNIOR

IF Janet was in her element, bowling across the country behind Rusty's lively team, Phyllis was in hers sitting beside English as he drove Tom's big motor along with rapid speed. It was the element of understanding in animals that appealed to Janet, while the cold, exact workings of the machine held a fascination for Phyllis. The idea that at the end of the reins a mind was working made Janet feel secure, while it terrified Phyllis. She preferred, as she said, something that couldn't answer back.

"English, how long will it take us to get to the ranch?" Janet inquired.

English turned around in his seat, and smiled. "We should be there by dinner time; anyway that's what I promised Tommy Junior, so we'll have to make a special effort."

He kept his face turned towards her for such a long time that Auntie Mogs grew suspicious.

"Mr. Kedgaree, are you letting Phyllis steer the car?"

"Yes ma'am, I am," English's voice sounded like a small boy who has been caught stealing fruit, and Auntie Mogs had to smile.

"Don't talk about the driver behind her back," Phyllis warned them, "and please try to appreciate the way I am keeping you out of all the mud-holes."

She had no sooner spoken the words than they splashed into a perfect pool of water, and some of the mud splashed in Janet's face.

"My dear Phyl," she protested, "are you trying to give me a mud bath just because you had one?"

Phyllis did not reply. The mudhole was unavoidable, for it stretched across the entire road, and as the front wheels went into it Phyllis realized it was deep. Without an instant's hesitation she stepped on the accelerator, and the car leaped suddenly forward to dry ground again. English was surprised, and Auntie Mogs and Janet were almost thrown forward on their faces.

"Sorry," Phyl called back laconically, "but I couldn't help it. Could I, English?"

English smiled his admiration.

"If you'd done anything else, Miss Phyllis, we'd be stuck in the mud this minute. It was a very pretty piece of driving."

"Make a bow, Phyl," Janet laughed, "only don't do it again."

Phyllis nodded, and for the next hour they drove along hardly exchanging a word. In spite of the occasional bumps, they had the feeling of flying through the air. The night before seemed a month ago. Even Miss Agatha and Rusty's hearty farewells, only a few hours old, seemed to have happened a long time back.

The countryside was the maddest profusion of color. Little unexpected clumps of flowers caught and delighted the eye, and beyond the desert of yellow sand reared the weird-shaped mesa, red under the sun, and a rich purple in the shadows.

After Phyllis' one mud puddle they had no more difficulty, and it was barely one o'clock when they suddenly beheld the Twin Star Ranch stretched out beneath them.

"Let's get out and jump," Janet laughed, for in the deceptive light it looked almost within jumping distance.

"Oh," she exclaimed a minute later, "is there

ever anything in the world as blue as the sky? Oh, Auntie Mogs I'm so happy, I could sing."

"Don't," Phyllis laughed, "you'll scare the engine."

Janet paid no attention to her.

"Just think, down in that house is Tommy Junior!"

"Don't forget Tommy Senior," Auntie Mogs protested, "nor Daisy. After all, they'll be there, too."

"Nor Circus, nor Jim, nor Sulky, nor Screw," Janet exulted. "I'm going to miss Beggar, though."

"English, why did Beggar leave the ranch?" Phyllis inquired.

"Why, didn't Tom ever write you about Beggar's streak of luck?" English demanded. Phyllis shook her head.

"Tell me," she asked.

"Why, Beggar's wealthy uncle, who was one of the eighty-niner's died, and all of his money came to Beggar. It was rather amusing, because the old man hated Beggar worse than sin, but he was his heir, and the old man forgot to make his will."

"A lot of money?" Auntie Mogs inquired.

"A lot for Beggar," English replied. "He

ought to get an income of about five thousand a year."

"Gracious!" Janet exclaimed. "Whatever will Beggar do with it?"

"That's what we're wondering," English replied. "He went up to Chicago to claim it, and we haven't heard from him since."

"Look!" Phyllis screamed excitedly, interrupting the conversation about Beggar. She pointed to a tiny dot of white, near the veranda of the ranch. They were now near enough to recognize objects. English followed her glance, and saw the white coop they had built for Tommy Junior to play in.

"That's the corral of His Imperial Highness, the Prince of Arizona," he explained, "and," as the car drew nearer, "I think he's in it this minute."

"Where?" Janet cried excitedly, and she and Auntie Mogs craned their necks over the car to get a first glimpse of their new nephew.

"Oh, English, you drive now. I'm too excited," Phyllis exclaimed, taking her hands from the wheel, and standing up in the car to get a better view.

English took the wheel, and shot the car up to

the veranda in less time than it takes to tell it.

"Oh dear," Janet said, "I don't see a single soul, and I wanted all the boys to be here."

She had hardly spoken the words, when a wild whoop seemed to come from every corner of the ranch, and in an instant the car was surrounded by grinning faces. Then there was a lull, and the door of the house opened, and Tom appeared with Daisy, and perched on his shoulders, crowing and hammering the top of his head with his tiny fists, was Tommy Junior.

Of course it is needless to say that Tommy Junior was the most beautiful baby in the world. His golden curls crowned a chubby little face. His eyes were a dark blue, his cheeks as pink as rose leaves, and his little turned-up nose, that wrinkled up into almost nothing when he laughed, had three golden freckles on it.

Tom came down the steps, and in an instant he was surrounded by the twins and Auntie Mogs. Daisy joined them and came in for her share of welcome. Tom put Tommy Junior down on the ground, and gravely introduced him.

"This is your Auntie Mogs, youngster," he said, and Tommy Junior held out his hand, and imitating Sulky's well-known mode of address

said in his baby voice which he strove vainly to make rough, " do."

Auntie Mogs picked him up in her arms, and kissed him. Then the Twins fell upon him. It was curious to watch the difference in their attitudes. Janet hugged him and kissed him, but Phyllis maintained her gravity and treated him quite as if he were her equal in age.

"How do you do, Tommy?" she said holding out her hand. Tommy stood and surveyed them both, his hands behind his back, a ridiculously solemn figure. He scowled rather ferociously at Janet, then rather reluctantly shook Phyllis' hand. Then, quite as if he had done the honors of the house and was a little tired of it all, he walked over to the boys, who were watching him with frank adoration.

The men of the Twin Star Ranch were all big, and Tommy Junior came to about the top of their riding boots. He went direct to English, and with the most disarming smile in the world lisped out, "Jan—Phyl."

English swung him up to his shoulder. "Now come and find out which is which," he said, and pointing to Phyllis, repeated, "This is Phyl." Tommy Junior crowed. "Phyl," he said again,

"I like you." Then he looked at Janet and scowled.

Janet was hurt, but she did not show it. She was used to children loving Phyllis more than they loved her. Little Don had always adored her, and had had very little use for Janet. Somehow she had hoped it would have been different with Tommy Junior. She would adopt Phyllis's method.

"Oh, all right, old sport," she said casually. Tommy Junior beamed at her.

"Jan," he said quite unexpectedly, and Janet almost spoiled it all by giving him another kiss.

Now that the family greetings were over, the boys crowded around for their share. Jim and Screw and Circus had been struck dumb at the first appearance of the Twins. They had expected to find them unchanged, and to behold two very grown-up young ladies, and very beautiful ones at that, was considerable of a shock. However, Janet and Phyllis soon put them at their ease.

Tom and Daisy took Auntie Mogs into the house. Jim followed with bags. Circus and Screw went off together towards the bunkhouse.

"Well, little lady, it sure is good to see you again," Sulky said, and Janet noticed that his

eyes were smiling at her. The tragic look that had always been half-hidden in their depths was now nothing but an occasional shadow. She tucked her arm in his familiarly.

"Oh, Sulky, come and show me the horses quick," she said.

English and Phyllis were busy talking to Tommy Junior. He was trying very hard to explain something. English listened to him seriously.

"He wants to show us his rabbit hutch," he explained to Phyllis.

"But however did you know what he was talking about?" Phyllis inquired.

"Oh, I always understand the little nipper," English boasted.

"Bunny," said Tommy Junior, and impatient at further delay, he put one of his pudgy little hands into Phyllis', and took a firm grip of English's little finger.

Tommy, coming to the door at this moment, saw the Twins disappearing in opposite directions. He whistled softly. "So that's the way the land lies, is it?" he asked of the sky and the mountain, and went back into the house smiling contentedly.

CHAPTER VIII

OLD FRIENDS

"DAISY, my dear, you're a very pretty sight in that pink dress," Auntie Mogs put down the magazine she was reading, as Daisy came into the living room, and looked at her approvingly. Daisy smiled happily, and without a word kissed Auntie Mogs on her soft cheek.

"Dear Auntie Mogs," she said softly, "how do you always think of such lovely things to say?"

"Oh, that's a habit of Auntie Mogs." Janet looked up from her place on the floor beside Phyllis, where they were both solemnly building a bridge for Tommy Junior, who was at this moment asleep in his own room across the hall.

"Nonsense," Auntie Mogs laughed; "It surely doesn't require a habit to tell Daisy she's pretty."

"No," said Phyllis seriously, "it's what you

might call a self-evident fact." And indeed this was true. Daisy's glorious golden hair and sky-blue eyes were set off by the delicate pink of her gingham gown, and she might have posed for a Greuze girl. She looked down at Phyllis, and suddenly her eyes filled with tears.

"Why, dear child, what is the matter?" Auntie Mogs inquired solicitously.

"Nothing," Daisy replied foolishly, "only I'm so happy." Auntie Mogs pulled her down on the arm of her chair, and kissed her tenderly.

"That settles it," she said decidedly. "You are coming back with us when we leave this autumn."

Daisy sat up and dried her eyes immediately. They were round as saucers as she looked at Auntie Mogs.

"What, and leave my Tom?" she inquired.

"What's this talk about leaving Tom?" Tom himself appeared in the doorway, and Daisy flew to his arms. "There's no talk of leaving you, dear," she said.

"Well, I should hope not," Tom stroked her hair affectionately.

Janet and Phyllis burst out laughing.

"Selfish pig!" said Janet.

"Oh but she is," said Phyllis. "What's the use of having a beautiful sister-in-law if you can't show her off to your friends?"

"Not to mention a nephew," Janet added.

From the room across the hall came a very decided sound. It was not a cry, but it definitely announced that His Imperial Highness, the Prince of Arizona, was awake. Everybody jumped up, and Phyllis said, "No, it's my turn. I promised him I'd wake him up. Get along with that bridge, Janet, or he'll never forgive us if it isn't finished."

Janet hastily piled the blocks one on top of the other, and completed a wobbly structure. Phyllis went out of the room, to return in a few minutes, carrying Tommy Junior piggy-back.

"Hello, young one!" Tom said, and his son replied, " 'do, dad?"

"Phyl, I think he's too heavy for you," Tom added. "I know you're his willing slave, but please don't strain your back."

Tommy Junior held out his arms, and announced that he would ride daddy's back. Tom swung him high and seated him on his shoulder. From that dizzy height he suddenly espied the bridge.

"Down, daddy, down," he announced.

"Well, does it suit your Imperial Highness?" Janet said, as he stood surveying the bridge, with his hands behind his back, in his characteristic little pose.

"Lovely, Jan, lovely, Jan. Fank you," and Tommy Junior held up his face patiently to be kissed, and Janet took advantage of it, and gave him a hug as well, whereupon he turned with a beatific smile to Phyllis.

Phyllis shook hands with him solemnly. "Glad you like it, old man," she said. "Suppose you tell me what your name is."

Tommy Junior screwed his little mouth around, and after an effort, that made him get red in the face, he announced in strident tones, "Pince of Arzoma." Then he turned with a sigh to the blocks.

"Tommy bad pinto," he announced, rushing madly around the room, on all fours, kicking out with one sturdy leg and sending the blocks helter skelter. Then he sat down on the floor beside Phyllis and chuckled heartily.

"Do it again," he demanded.

And so the game went on. Janet and Phyllis patiently building all kinds of fanciful towers for him to destroy. Sometimes he was a pony,

sometimes a mountain lion, sometimes a Mexican, and sometimes just Sulky or English or one of the other men. When he was Sulky, he would double up his fists and batter the blocks down, his face set in hard lines. When he was English, and this game amused Phyllis more than any of the others, he would cup his chin in his pudgy little hand, study the structure, and then quite deliberately, and quite as English might have done, he would take out the most important block, and watch the whole thing tumble to pieces.

Lunch-time interrupted the game. Tommy was put in his high chair beside his mother. This was too tame to suit him.

"Ding," he demanded, thumping his tray with his silver mug, "Tommy Junior sit 'tween Ding and Phyl." The change was arranged, not without protest from Daisy.

"My child is going to be spoiled to death. I can see it," she said hopelessly. "I tried to put my foot down—"

"Poor little girl, what chance has one tiny foot against so many big boots?" Tom teased from his place at the other end of the table.

"Besides," English added, "this isn't the kind of spoiling that will hurt the nipper."

At this point, Screw Williams slouched into the room. He had been thrown from a broncho, before the rest of the outfit, that morning, and he was in a very bad humor. Tommy Junior who was thoroughly satisfied with himself at this moment, waited for his customary salute, but for once Screw forgot it. Therefore, Tommy Junior leaned way over his tray, and said in his most ingratiating tone, " 'do, Squew?"

Screw nodded his head sullenly. Tommy gazed at him inquisitively out of half-closed eyes. Then a roguish smile lighted up his little face.

"Squew, tiss Tommy Junior," he insisted.

Screw Williams turned a rich crimson, while the rest of the table waited. "Pease," Tommy's face began to pucker into a frown. It was too much for Screw. He got up from his place, and lumbered over to the high chair, and bent his black head over the golden curls. Tommy Junior enveloped his neck in the embrace of his pudgy little arms. "Tommy Junior loves Squew," he said heartily.

The big cowman grinned foolishly. He was terribly embarrassed, but at the same time he was very proud. "You're all right, youngster," he mumbled, and resumed his place.

"Well of all the partiality!" Circus barely protested; "and Screw ain't what you might call pretty, either," he added in aggrieved tones.

"Maybe the Prince is sorry for him, and wants to show him that looks don't count," Jim suggested.

Screw, now thoroughly good-natured once more, looked up and grinned. "Jealous, that's what you are," he sneered. At this moment, José appeared with the dinner, and for the moment, Tommy Junior's partiality was forgotten.

The Twins had been at the ranch for four days, and so far they'd had no signs of their trunks, but that morning word had come through on the wire from Loophole that they were at the station, and Circus had promised to drive in for them. Janet and Phyllis accompanied him. Once in the village, they made straight for Mr. Hartley's store. The last time they had visited Tom, Mr. Hartley had given them each lollypops, because he couldn't tell them apart, and he had made a bet with Phyllis that he could.

It was just as difficult to-day to tell the Twins apart as it was then, and Mr. Hartley waddled out from behind his counter, to hold up his hands in despair. Then without a word he dived behind

the candy counter, and started to select lollypops, thought better of it, and emerged with two bags filled with gumdrops.

The Twins thank him profusely, but they did not make the mistake of offering to pay for them. Instead, they bought a celluloid collar and a bright pink necktie, which they gravely presented to Circus on their return to the automobile.

Circus roared with delight. Curiously enough, although Circus was the youngest of the men at the ranch, he alone seemed totally unaware that the Twins had grown up.

He examined the pink tie closely. "My thanks, ladies, and I'll sure wear it next time I go to Phœnix," he assured them heartily.

"Oh, Circus, you wouldn't!" Janet protested.

"Wouldn't I? You wait and see," Circus replied.

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Phyllis inquired. "Remember, I'm going to drive the car home, and you're not to tell Tom."

"We're waiting for the down train," Circus explained; "and as for telling Tom, I'm mum."

They heard the train whistle, and after a minute it crawled into the little station.

Circus went to the baggage car to get the

provisions he was expecting. Phyllis sat at the wheel, and Janet sat beside her. There was still place on the roomy seat for Circus. The trunks were in the tonneau. Suddenly she gave an exclamation of horror, as the passengers filed off the train.

"Look!" she exclaimed to Janet, and pointed. Janet followed her finger.

"Oh, Phyl, for pity's sake, start!" she besought, and without a word Phyllis started the car, and met Circus halfway with the box on his shoulder. "Hurry up, Circus, there's not a minute to lose," she said urgently.

Circus deposited his box beside the trunks, jumped in, and in the twinkling of an eye, Phyllis was racing the car down the road towards home.

CHAPTER IX

MISS WEATHERBY

"DAISY, Daisy! Auntie Mogs! Do come here, something perfectly terrible has happened!"

The Twins were hardly out of the car before they began calling. Auntie Mogs and Daisy rushed out onto the veranda.

"What is the matter?" Auntie Mogs demanded.

"Is Tommy hurt?" Daisy exclaimed.

"No, no, of course not," Phyllis assured them.

"It's nothing dreadful like that," Janet added. "Whom do you think Phyllis saw at the station?"

"Why, I can't imagine," Auntie Mogs replied; "tell us."

"No, you've got to guess," Phyllis insisted.

"Was it Beggar?" Daisy inquired.

"No indeed," Janet replied. "If it had been Beggar, we would have brought him along with us."

"Then who was it?" Daisy begged. "Please tell us."

The Twins spoke together. "It was Miss Weatherby," they chanted.

"Aunt Louise!" Daisy exclaimed in consternation.

Auntie Mogs looked from one twin to the other. "Are you quite sure?" she asked.

"Quite sure," Phyllis replied. "Dear Auntie Mogs, do you think it possible I could ever forget Miss Weatherby, after that fatal night in the sleeping car?"

Auntie Mogs laughed in spite of herself. "But why isn't she with you? Surely you stopped and spoke to her?"

"'Deed we did nothing of the kind!" Janet denied emphatically. "Phyl saw her, pointed her out to me, then to Circus, and then we ran away just as fast as the car would take us. She couldn't see us for our dust."

By this time Circus had joined them. He was grinning sheepishly.

"Do you mean to tell me that you children didn't stop and speak to Miss Weatherby?" Auntie Mogs asked aghast. "Didn't she see you?"

"No ma'am," Circus replied. "Maybe she saw our dust, but she didn't see us."

"Oh, dear, why is she coming?" Daisy lamented. "We've been so happy, and now I know she's going to make trouble."

"Nonsense, my dear, she can't possibly make trouble," Auntie Mogs put her arm around Daisy protectingly.

"Maybe she isn't coming to see you," Circus suggested hopefully.

"Nonsense, of course she is, I saw it in her eye," Phyllis sounded very dismal.

Janet looked toward the corral, and saw Tom standing on the gate. "Let's tell Tom the good news," she said cheerfully. "Oh, Tommy!" she called.

Tom joined them and heard the news. He made rather a wry face, but he put his arm around Daisy's shoulder.

"Look here, my dear," he said, "please remember that you are Mrs. Thomas Page, no longer Daisy Weaver, and whatever your charming aunt has to say to you, she will say to me as well."

Daisy looked up at him with frank adoration in her eyes. "Thank you, darling," she said shyly, and stood on tiptoe to kiss him.

Circus whistled in what he vainly hoped was an unconcerned manner. Demonstrations of affection in public always embarrassed him.

"Guess I'll unload the trunks," he said, and set about it briskly.

"We're going to unpack," Jan and Phyllis said together, speaking to Auntie Mogs, "and leave you and Daisy to entertain Miss Weatherby when she comes."

They went into their room and told Circus where to put their trunks. It was characteristic of Janet to unpack her riding habit first, while Phyllis got out all the presents they had brought for Tommy Junior.

"I think he'll like Laddy Boy best of all," she said, as she unwrapped a woolly dog.

"No," Janet disagreed, "I think he'll like the little white bunny."

Phyllis went on unpacking animals of all descriptions, and "I know what I'll do, I'll line them up beside his crib, so that he sees them first thing when he wakes up," she said.

She tiptoed into Tommy Junior's room, put Laddy Boy and the bunny at the end of his crib, and put the others on the table. Tommy Junior never stirred in his sleep.

As Phyllis came softly out of the room and closed the door behind her, she heard carriage wheels on the road. She dashed back to her own room and poked her head in the door.

"Jan, here she comes," she whispered. "Let's go out and watch the fun."

Janet followed her, and together they tiptoed to the living-room where they could command a view of the veranda, where Auntie Mogs and Daisy sat waiting. Down the road came the rickety buggy of Mr. Locke. The side curtains were flapping in the breeze, it was badly spattered with mud, and with every bump in the road the two occupants bounced horribly.

At last the little lawyer from Loophole pulled up at the carriage block, and jumped out. Miss Weatherby got down gingerly, paused in the road to rearrange her disheveled hat and veil, and then turned to her niece who, with Auntie Mogs, had risen to receive her.

"How do you do?" she said coldly, and held out a limp hand to Auntie Mogs.

"How do you do, Miss Weatherby," Auntie Mogs said cordially. "This certainly is a surprise."

Miss Weatherby nodded curtly, and turned to

Daisy. "Is it true that you have a son?" she demanded.

"Yes, Aunt Louise," Daisy replied timidly.

"I will see him," Miss Weatherby announced firmly.

"But he's asleep," Daisy protested.

"I prefer babies when they're asleep."

Daisy shrugged her shoulders imperceptibly, and without a word led the way indoors, keeping hold of Auntie Mogs' hand, as if for protection. The Twins followed at a discreet distance.

"If she wakes Tommy Junior, I'll shake her," Phyllis announced threateningly.

But Tommy Junior was not asleep. He was sitting up in bed, gazing with rapt attention at his two bed-fellows.

"Why, where did those come from?" Daisy exclaimed excitedly.

"Dog," said Tommy Junior rapturously, "bunny." Then he caught sight of Aunt Louise. He stared at her for a moment, then his baby face puckered up into a horrible frown. "No, no," he said crossly, "take it away, muvver, take it away."

There was an awkward moment of silence, and then Miss Weatherby drew herself up to her full-

est height, and inquired indignantly, "Is the child alluding to me?"

The Twins at the door snickered audibly. Auntie Mogs breathed a hasty, "no indeed," and Daisy picked up Tommy Junior.

"Tommy, this is your great aunt, Louise," she said, with a tiny note of malice in her voice.

"Aunt will do, I think, Daisy. There is no need to add the great," Miss Weatherby protested.

But Tommy would have none of her. He repeated, "take it away," until he almost became violent in his fury.

They all went out to the porch, and Janet and Phyllis, after saying a hasty "how do you do," led Tommy off towards the corral to exhibit his new presents to Sulky, who was busy mending a bridle.

Auntie Mogs and Daisy led their guest to the sitting-room.

Miss Weatherby stayed for three days. They were not uneventful, for Tommy Junior distinguished himself at luncheon by spilling his bowl of milk into his great aunt's lap, and Tom absolutely refused to have him punished, protesting that it was not intentional on his part.

On the second day of the never-to-be-forgotten

visit it rained for a few minutes, and when it cleared Tommy Junior sallied forth to make mud pies.

Miss Weatherby, whom Auntie Mogs had soothed into an almost amiable frame of mind, went out to get better acquainted with the child, and the terrible result of her effort was a mud pie, well aimed by the sturdy Tommy, in the lap of her black satin dress.

It was all done in the spirit of generosity, for Tommy Junior had offered it as a cake. But so often things are not considered in the light in which they are meant, and Miss Weatherby was a master hand at misunderstanding, as Phyllis could testify.

She grossly misunderstood her great nephew, and was on the point of administering forceful punishment, when Sulky Prescott interfered. From under the irate lady's nose, he picked up the outraged youngster, and swung him to his shoulder.

"Were you aware, my man, that I was about to punish that child?" Miss Weatherby asked indignantly.

"I reckon that was about it," Sulky answered calmly.

"Then you deliberately interfered!"

"Yes'm, I calculated to do just that," Sulky told her without change of tone.

"That is pure insolence!" stormed Miss Weatherby.

"No, ma'am, there I disagree," Sulky drawled, "there I disagree. You all were guilty of that. You see we kinda figure that this young one is ours, and we don't hold with having him spanked, not unless he deserves it, and I know he gave you that mud pie just out of the kindness of his little heart, so I just naturally couldn't stand by and see you spank him."

"Oh, Uncle Pete, I could kiss you!" Janet exclaimed later. She had been a delighted listener to the above conversation.

She had lapsed into calling Sulky Uncle Pete, as she had on the last visit, thereby adopting Peter Gibb's name for him.

"Well, little lady, go right ahead," Sulky smiled, then he added gravely. "I'm right sorry I had to speak sharp to the lady, but I couldn't see the young one get what he didn't deserve."

Janet laughed. "Well, don't tell Phyl, or she'll want to murder her in her sleep," she said.

The last day was the stormiest of all.

It began by Tommy Junior's screaming lustily at the very sight of Miss Weatherby, which caused that incensed lady to take poor Daisy to task. She said very many disagreeable things, and Daisy cried, which in turn infuriated Tom, who did not mince matters, but told his aunt-in-law that he would be glad to send her into town as soon as she was ready. She left, the very picture of outraged dignity. No one saw her depart with any remorse except perhaps Auntie Mogs, who hated to have any one unhappy.

"Daisy, do stop thinking of your disagreeable relative," Janet said when Miss Weatherby was well on her way to Loophole in the car with English and Phyllis. "Blessings lighten as they take their flight, and I'm just beginning to realize what it all was."

"Janet, dear, don't be disrespectful," Auntie Mogs admonished gently.

"Well then, Daisy, stop thinking about Tommy Junior's great aunt," Janet amended her first remark, but hardly improved it in point of respect.

"I wasn't thinking of her, exactly," Daisy said slowly. "I was just thinking what a difference there was in aunts generally."

CHAPTER X

TWO LETTERS

"WHERE are you going, Jan?" Phyllis inquired lazily. She was reading in a shady corner of the veranda, but she looked up as her twin came out of the house, in her immaculate, white riding habit and shining boots. The Twins refused to wear khaki in spite of laundry bills.

"I'm riding for the mail, lazy one," Janet told her, "and if you were a little less indolent you would come with me."

"No, thanks," Phyllis drawled. "I'm much too comfy. Bring me back a letter from Sally and one from Taffy, and don't get kidnaped by the Mexicans."

Janet laughed at her, jumped off the porch, and went to the corral where Jim was saddling Booster for her. He was the same little wise pony that she had ridden on her last visit to the

ranch. He looked at her expectantly. She fed him with sugar she had in her pocket for him, and kissed the white star on his forehead.

"It beats all the way girls spoil horses and dogs and kids," Jim said chuckling.

"Why does it spoil them?" Janet demanded. "Isn't Booster the best-natured horse on the ranch?"

"I reckon he is," Jim agreed. "He's certainly better tempered than my pinto, who I think is the cussedest horse in Arizona."

"Well, that's your fault," Janet informed him triumphantly. "If you'd given Napoleon lumps of sugar, and kissed him, he would have the most angelic disposition imaginable. It makes a horse good-tempered to spoil him, and that's more than spurs will do."

"Well, now, I never thought of that. I figure maybe you're right, but I don't think I'll start kissing Napoleon. He might not understand, and think I was trying to bite him. Well, here you are. No need to help you into the saddle," he said, as he held Booster's bridle. "For all your fancy duds, you ride as straight as any Western girl I ever knew."

Janet flushed with pleasure, and sprang lightly

into the saddle. Jim watched her until she was just a speck on the sand.

In the meantime, Tommy Junior, who had been taking his nap, woke up and called lustily for Phyl. She hurried into his room, and unearthed him from the mound of toys that he had insisted upon taking to bed with him. She dressed him in a fresh suit of white, and together they went back to the porch, just as English was coming up the steps. In a flash, Tommy Junior left Phyllis and threw his arms around English's legs. English picked him up and swung him to his shoulder.

Phyllis smiled. "Do you know," she said, "I think you're the busiest man on the Twin Star Ranch? I never see you from morning to night."

"Then it's worth while staying away if I've been missed," English replied quietly, "but I'm here now. Is there anything I can do for you?"

Tommy Junior answered the question. "Bunnies," he demanded, "Ding and Phyl, tum."

"That's settled," English laughed; "his lordship has spoken." And they went off towards the rabbit hutch. There, to their utter consternation, they found that a weasel had killed the one sole occupant of the rabbit hutch. Tommy Junior wept and wailed, and it took all of Phyllis' and

English's powers of persuasion to lure him back to the house and his new toys. They sat on the floor and played with him, and there Janet found them, their heads very close together over a performing donkey, when she came back with the mail. She tossed a letter into Phyllis' lap.

"From Sally," she said. Phyllis looked up at her questioningly.

"Did you hear from Peter?" she inquired.

"No," said Janet quietly, "I did not," and she turned on her heel, and walked away.

But Phyllis did not tease. She had noticed the hurt look in her twin's eyes. Instead she called after her, "Did Auntie Mogs have any letters?"

Janet nodded. "Yes, one from Mrs. Todd."

"Oh well then, dear," Phyllis exclaimed; "you'll have some news of Peter!"

"I'll probably hear that he's busy playing tennis with the Blake girls," Janet said, smiling at her own foolish jealousy.

"Well, if you do, you may be sure he's beating them unmercifully," Phyllis replied laughing.

Janet went off to deliver the rest of her mail, and English turned to Phyllis.

"And aren't you expecting a special letter,

too?" with more eagerness in his voice than the question demanded. Phyllis looked at him, and her eyes were wide and frank as she replied seriously, "No there isn't anybody like Peter to write me letters."

English returned her gaze. Within him there was a struggle going on, for he was determined not to show his feelings.

"I'm glad of that," he said simply. There was a little silence between them, that might have become embarrassing, had not Janet burst into the room.

"Oh, Phyl!" she exclaimed breathlessly, "Auntie Mogs has just had a letter from Mrs. Todd, and she says Peter has been very ill with double pneumonia."

Phyllis was on her feet at once, and had her arm around Janet's shoulder.

"Oh, what a shame, darling!" she exclaimed. In her twin's misery, English and even Tommy Junior were forgotten.

That night at the table, the mail was discussed. As soon as Tom heard of Peter's illness, he insisted that he be invited to the ranch at once to recuperate, and English promised to take the telegram into Loophole and see it dispatched that

very night. When that question was settled, Tom drew out a letter from his pocket. The men all looked at him questioningly, for the bright purple envelope could only mean that it had been sent by one hand.

"A letter from Beggar," he said unnecessarily. "I thought you boys might be interested in hearing it. He took out the two closely-written sheets, and an odor of perfume pervaded the room.

"My word!" English said, "has Beggar taken to using scent?"

The rest chuckled, and Tom held up his hands in silence.

"Wait," he said, and began to read.

"*Dear Tom:* (he read)

"I hope this letter finds you well, for that will be better than it is leaving me. Money is not all that it is cracked up to be, and there are times when I wish that my uncle had made a will, and left his pile founding a home for disabled coyotes, but it's only sometimes I feel like that. It's great living in a hotel, and having people to do everything for you, but you know, Tom, I can't get over the idea that they're trying to kid me most of the time. Take this letter paper, for instance. The girl swore solemnly that it was the right thing for a gentleman, but I just can't believe she meant it. Well, anyhow, and to cut this letter short, I've just about had enough of it, and so I've been thinking what I could do that wouldn't be exactly work, and the other

day my chance came, but it's terrible hard breaking the news to you boys, just what I'm going to be, but here it is in plain writin', and you boys can laugh as much as you like,—a moving picture actor. All I've got to do is a few stunts on horseback, and they're going to pay me for it."

Tom could not continue because the boys were laughing so uproariously.

"Beggar an actor!" Jim exclaimed.

"Oh, my hat!" Circus barely reached for his glass, and took a gulp of water. "And that's the funniest thing I ever heard," he said.

English was speechless with mirth. All he could say was, "Beggar, good old Beggar!"

"Humph!" was Sulky's only addition to the conversation.

"Go ahead and have your laugh out, if you must," Tom told them, "but I warn you the best part is still to come."

"Oh, do go on, Tom," Daisy exclaimed. "I'm dying to hear the rest."

"—But here's the part of the idea that I really like. We're coming to Loophole to take the picture, and I sure do look forward to seeing you all again. In the meantime, give my respects to the missus, and all the outfit, including your two sisters and Miss Carter. I sure will be glad to say howdo to them. As for Tommy Junior, well just wait 'til I see that young one. It's

going to be some disappointment if that young one has forgotten me.

"Very truly yours,
"TODD BEGGS"

After this surprising announcement, it is probable that only Janet remembered Peter, for the rest talked of nothing but Beggar, and the coming movies.

"We can watch them take all the pictures!" Phyllis exclaimed. "Perhaps they'll want the boys to be extras."

Tom laughed, and pulled Phyllis down on his knee. They were all in the living-room. "A little thing like the work on the Twin Star Ranch doesn't matter, does it?" he inquired.

"Not the least bit in the world," Phyllis replied.

"Well I'm sure if they see Tommy Junior, they'll want him in the picture," Auntie Mogs laughed.

"Humph, might make something of a picture if they had him in it," Sulky drawled.

"Oh the little nipper would make any picture," English agreed.

Circus had his head on the back of his chair, and was lazily blowing smoke circles into the air.

"Wonder who the leading lady is going to be,"

he asked dreamily, and then he was offended because the rest laughed so hard.

Suddenly English jumped up, and went over to Janet who was sitting by herself in the corner, taking very little part in the conversation.

"Come along and let me have that telegram. I'd almost forgotten it," he said briskly.

Janet smiled up at him gratefully. "Thank you, English, I knew you wouldn't forget," she said, then crossing over to Miss Carter she said, "Auntie Mogs, will you write it?"

"Certainly I will, dear child, come along to my room and help me."

English went to get the car, and Phyllis watched him wistfully. She had a curious feeling that she liked English better than he liked her, and that it was very silly of her.

Tom watched her, but said nothing until English came into the house for the telegram. Then he called out quite casually,

"Oh, English, take Phyl along with you, and show her the moon."

"If Miss Phyllis would care to go, I should be only too delighted for her company," English replied with his never-failing courtesy.

Phyllis looked at him reproachfully. Then her own merry little smile tilted up the corners of her mouth, and made her eyes dance.

"Oh, English," she chided, "don't you want me any more than that?"

English looked at her, and an answering twinkle appeared in his blue eyes.

"Get your coat," he said quietly, but with a wealth of meaning in his voice.

CHAPTER XI

LOST!

TOMMY JUNIOR was lost. For an hour consternation reigned at the Twin Star Ranch. Phyllis had been the first to miss him. She had gone into his room where he was supposed to be taking his nap, and discovered that he was not there. Thinking that Auntie Mogs or Daisy must have taken him up from his nap rather earlier than usual, she went to ask them. They were busy on the north side of the veranda making new curtains for the living-room.

"Where's Tommy Junior?" Phyllis demanded, conscious of a fear that she would not name.

"In bed," Daisy told her.

"But he's not," Phyllis denied, "I've just come from his room, and one side of the crib is down."

"Well, Janet must have taken him then," Auntie Mogs suggested.

Phyllis shook her head, "No, Jan's gone for the mail."

Auntie Mogs and Daisy dropped their sewing and got up, disturbed.

"But he can't possibly be lost," Auntie Mogs protested, "Where could he go?"

"Perhaps one of the boys—" Daisy discarded the idea as soon as she voiced it. "No they never take him without telling me."

Phyllis gave herself a little shake. "I'll go and find Tom, and see if he has him, by any chance," she said as she hurried off to the corral.

Auntie Mogs and Daisy made a thorough search of the house.

It was several minutes before any one would really admit that Tommy Junior was lost. Everybody looked where everybody else had looked, and everybody called. José let the dinner burn up, and English's and Circus's horses stayed saddled where their riders had dismounted, their reins dangling on the ground.

Janet was still away for the mail. Screw Williams suggested the theory that perhaps she had taken him with her on the front of her saddle. No one had seen her leave, and they all clung to the hope that this might be true, although they knew in their hearts that it was practically impossible. It was impossible that he could have wan-

dered very far by himself, but he could have easily roamed out of calling distance, and there were so many directions.

English climbed to the roof of the house, and swept the desert with his glasses. The flat, yellow, background occasionally dotted with mesquite or cacti, was all that rewarded his search.

Every one hunted aimlessly, and the men's strong voices grew hushed as fear and apprehension conquered hope.

Then suddenly Jim remembered that he had seen a Mexican talking with José down the road, the day before, and the terror that comes with the thought of a kidnaped child, gripped everybody's heart.

José was interviewed, and his vehement denial, mixed with his genuine distress at the baby's disappearance, allayed their suspicions somewhat.

Sulky started off down the road to meet Janet. He had not gone very far when he saw her galloping towards him. She drew in at the sight of him waving his hat.

"Oh, little lady, didn't you take him?" he asked incoherently, for all hope seemed to go, at sight of Janet riding alone.

"Take who, Uncle Pete?" Janet asked cheerily.

"Tommy Junior. The little codger's lost," Sulky told her.

Janet understood at a glance that things must be seriously wrong at the ranch, because Sulky was the last person in the world to become agitated. As they hurried back to the house Sulky told her all that he knew. She hurried into the living-room, to find Daisy prostrate on the sofa, calling hysterically for her baby, with Auntie Mogs trying to soothe her. She met Tom in the doorway. He was looking twenty years older.

Jim and Circus were in the kitchen, trying to persuade the frightened José that his friend was a kidnaper.

She went out and found Sulky, and together they made a thorough search of the bunkhouse.

Phyllis had been sitting on Tommy Junior's crib, with her head in her hands. Suddenly she got up and walked towards the front door. Just as she did so, English came up the steps. They both looked at each other hard for a full minute. The same thought seemed to be struggling in both their minds, for they were both remembering the last time they had met in exactly the same spot. Tommy Junior had been holding Phyllis's hand.

On the floor with his stuffed Bunny clutched firmly in his arm lay Tommy Junior

At the sight of English he had run to him, been swung shoulder high—

Phyllis and English were still looking at each other, when they both said, "Bunny," without exactly knowing why. Then as if they were still in a dream, they ran, hand in hand, to the little white rabbit hutch, which was behind the garden, at the back of the house.

"Tommy darling," Phyllis cried, and they waited breathless for an answer. None came. Then English opened the top of the little house which opened like a cellar door, and there lying on the floor with his stuffed Bunny clutched firmly in his arm lay Tommy Junior fast asleep, curled up in a little ball.

The relief was almost too much for Phyllis, but she stifled a sob, and turned to English.

"You carry him back," she said. "I'll go ahead and tell them." She tore off to the house just as fast as she could, shouting "He's found, he's found!" all the way. She dropped the news in the kitchen, and dashed into the living-room.

"It's all right, Daisy, he's found!" she cried exultantly. "He's safe and sound. English and I found him in the rabbit hutch asleep."

As if to prove her words, English came into the room, Tommy Junior held tight in his arms. He was still asleep. Daisy caught him to her, and covered his tousled head with kisses.

"Somebody tell Tom, please," she said, thinking of the one who really came first in her heart.

But Tom had heard from the kitchen. Six long strides brought him into the living-room, and in an instant he had Daisy and Tommy in his big arms. The rest tiptoed out smiling idiotically.

Phyllis found to her amazement that she was holding English's hand, but instead of letting go she squeezed it hard.

Every one's nerves were taut for the rest of the day, and the diversion that arrived at dinner-time was a welcome one. Tommy had not been put to bed, because no one could bear to have him out of their sight.

They were all out on the veranda, waiting for José to blow his bugle.

"I don't mind saying I'm hungry," Circus announced, as he wound up a walking clown for perhaps the fiftieth time, and started it on its way towards English to the accompaniment of Tommy's delighted shrieks.

"Hello, what's all this?" Screw unwrapped his

legs from around the chair that he was tipping back against the side of the house, and nodded his head lazily in the direction of the road.

A cloud of fine white dust was bowling towards them, and after a minute they heard the tramp tramp of galloping horses. The twilight made it impossible to distinguish the riders.

The air was suddenly rent by a blood-curdling whoop, and five horses were pulled up before the steps.

"Beggar!" they all said together.

"And company," Beggar added, as he jumped from his horse. He made a sweeping gesture which included his companions. "My present outfit, boys, all discontented cowmen like myself."

By this time, the men had surrounded Beggar, and were slapping him heartily on the back. Tom finally made himself sufficiently heard to welcome the rest of his guests.

Daisy had slipped into the house to tell José that there would be five more to dinner, and Auntie Mogs joined her to help reset the table.

The Twins remained to be introduced, and Beggar embarrassed them by demanding of his friends—

"Aren't they just as nice as I told you they'd

be? And they can ride rings around Miss—" (mentioning a well-known star).

The tallest of the men who may have known a black horse from a white horse, but had certainly never been a cowman, which was proved by his very bad seat in the saddle, murmured a delighted, "I'll say so," thereby proving his city education. The rest grinned sheepishly.

Sulky, as usual, was the last to say, "How do you do!" but when he did slouch down the steps, he had Tommy Junior on his shoulder.

"Hello, Buster, you know who this is?" he asked holding out his arms.

"Beggar," Tommy Junior crowed delightedly, much to everybody's astonishment, and allowed himself to be tossed high into the air.

"I told you he'd remember me," Beggar boasted. Tommy Junior hugged him tight. "Beggar come back," he kept saying excitedly.

Beggar sat down with him on his knee on the steps. "What you been up to? Tell me all about it," he inquired.

Tommy Junior looked in the thick-gathering dusk, and replied diffidently, "Tommy Junior is a bunny. He sleeps in bunny's house, and everybody cries 'cept me."

"Go on, you don't say so," Beggar laughed heartily, not thinking there was anything true in what the child said. The rest did not interrupt.

"Everybody cry. Screw cries, Jim cries, Circus cries, Sulky's eyes all wet, daddy cries, muvver cry and cry and cry. Auntie Mogs and Jan and Phyl, and yes, José, and my Ding. I love Ding," he added confidentially, and wriggled away from Beggar, to go over and stand beside English, who caressed his golden curls with his big hand, while he talked to two of the guests.

Daisy and Auntie Mogs came out and greeted the guests.

"Oh, Beggar," Daisy said, "have they told you about Tommy's being lost?"

"Sure thing," Beggar replied, "Buster told me himself. Gave you a pretty big scare, I guess."

"Indeed it did," Auntie Mogs replied. "Poor José is so upset that he said he can't possibly blow the bugle to-night."

There was a hearty laugh at this, and they all went in to dinner.

The talk was mostly about motion pictures, and Beggar's new life. He was certainly changed from the Beggar they remembered, as far as ap-

pearances went. He had always liked noisy colors, but to-day he outdid himself, and as Sulky expressed it, he looked like the bad dream of a cowman. His shirt was large checks of yellow and green. He wore an Indian's beaded belt, and instead of tight leather chaps he had on a huge pair, decorated and studded with silver nails. He wiped his face with a large silk handkerchief, embroidered in each corner with a green horseshoe. His neckerchief was bright orange, and his sombrero was a ridiculously large one, and had a fanciful band around it. His spurs were murderous. His companions were dressed in much the same way.

But underneath, it was the same Beggar, unspoiled, good-natured, hearty.

"We start shooting to-morrow. Shooting the camera, I mean, marm," he turned to Auntie Mogs and said in explanation. "Up where we had the barbecue. Come out and watch us. I don't figure that the little leading lady knows much about riding, but we'll see," he added.

They saw their guests off at about eight o'clock.

Janet and Phyllis went straight to bed, for it had been a very exciting day, and they wanted to be up in the morning, as Beggar had said they

would begin work by nine o'clock, and it was a good two-hours' ride.

When the light was out, and the Twins had kissed each other good night, Janet rolled over to go to sleep, but Phyllis lay staring at the ceiling.

"Jan," she whispered softly, "I'm going to ask you an awfully silly question. Promise to answer truthfully."

"Of course, darling, what is it?" Janet inquired, suddenly wide awake.

Phyllis' words came muffled from the depths of the pillow. "Jan, do you think English likes me?"

Janet burst out laughing, then she hugged Phyllis impulsively. "Of course, he does darling, he's perfectly crazy about you, anybody can see that."

"And you don't care?" Phyllis inquired.

"Care!" Janet exclaimed. "Of course, I care. I'm tickled to death."

Phyllis gave a delighted little chuckle. "Oh, Jan, you're such a thoroughly satisfactory twin." A long silence, and then, out of the darkness—

"Phyl, do you think I'll get an answer from my telegram to Peter, to-morrow?"

"Of course," said Phyllis drowsily, "and he's sure to come."

CHAPTER XII

DAISY'S STORY

THE Twins were up early the next morning, and as they dressed they heard the voice of Auntie Mogs raised in argument. Janet opened the door.

"What under the sun do you suppose Daisy and Auntie Mogs are fussing about?" she asked.

They were both dressed, and they sauntered into the dinning-room.

"What's the trouble?" Phyllis inquired. "You two are positively rowing. We heard you 'way in our room."

"Dear child, what a disagreeable word to use," was Auntie Mogs' protestation. "I was only trying to explain to Daisy that she must go with you to-day to watch them make the pictures. I don't think she thinks I know how to take care of Tommy Junior," she smiled gently.

"Oh, but Auntie Mogs dear, I do think so!"

Daisy exclaimed, shocked at such a suggestion; "but I do think that it would be an imposition to leave you home all day while I'm off gallivanting."

"Nonsense!" said Janet emphatically, "of course you're coming with us. Auntie Mogs will have the time of her life keeping house."

"You don't think we're going without you?" Phyllis inquired quietly in her turn; "because we're not."

Daisy laughed happily. "You're all such darlings to me," she said. "How can I ever thank you?"

"Silly thing," said Phyllis, pinching her cheek, but Janet replied impatiently:

"Daisy, when will you ever learn that you are a very wonderful person, and that people adore being nice to you, in fact they couldn't be anything else?"

"Oh, Janet darling, do you really mean that?" Daisy asked flushing.

"'Course I mean it, and here comes Tom to tell you I am right."

Tom entered the room at this point of the conversation and Janet turned to him.

"Won't you, Tom darling?" she asked exaggeratedly.

"Now what?" Tom inquired pinching her cheek.

"Agree with me, of course," Janet explained.

"About what?"

"About everything."

Tom appeared to consider, "Well, I'd hardly like to be quoted as saying that," he replied.

"What! you mean to say that you don't trust our judgment blindly?"

"Our?" Tom inquired, "who thinks as you do, little Cyclone, I'd like to know?"

Phyllis looked at him reproachfully. "Why I do, of course."

Tom shook his head, "Not on everything," he told her.

"But she does so," Janet protested. "The Page Twins always think alike."

Tom laughed, "What will you give me, if I tell you two things you don't agree on?" he inquired of them both.

"Anything you like," they promised.

"Very well. Case in point number one—Janet likes Sulky best of all this outfit, and Phyllis likes —" he broke off and began to whistle, "Rule Britannia."

"Tommy, that's not fair," Phyllis protested.

"Of course we don't both like the same people best, if we did we'd be sure to fight, but I do love Sulky a whole lot, and I'm sure Janet—" she paused and looked at her twin.

"Of course, I adore English"—Janet finished for her.

Tom and Daisy and Auntie Mogs laughed heartily.

"You'll admit that I scored that one anyway," Tom said. "Now then, for the second—Janet would a great deal rather ride her horse than—"

"Oh, I know what you are going to say," Janet protested; "and I suppose you are right. But they are not things that matter."

"Oh, I see," Tom was amused. "Well suppose you tell me what you were talking about when I came in."

"We were saying that Daisy was an adorable person and that everybody had to love her whether they wanted to or not," Phyllis told him, quite ignoring the fact that it was Janet who had really said it.

Tom assumed a judicial air. "There does seem to be a germ of truth in what you say," he admitted.

"Well, I like that!" Daisy exclaimed laughingly.

"But," he continued, "I think before I agree with you fully, I should change the degree of your adjective, and say 'the most adorable' and then you would be somewhere near the truth."

"What a pretty compliment, Tom, I'm glad you still know how to pay them," Auntie Mogs said approvingly.

"Most time to be starting, I reckon, if we want to be at Beggar's shooting," Circus interrupted from through the window. "I sure am anxious to see that man act." He chuckled appreciatively.

"Into your riding clothes, Daisy, and be quick about it," Janet directed, and Daisy with a look at Auntie Mogs that was answered with a nod and a smile, went off to do as she was told.

"And now for the matter of forfeits," Tom said quietly.

The Twins looked at him questioningly.

"I want a solemn promise that you will not do anything reckless to-day," he said seriously; "no bareback riding, or picking up handkerchiefs with your teeth. Beggar is sure to try and make you show off, and far be it from me to stop any

fun, but I want it understood that there are to be no bones broken."

Janet and Phyllis were highly amused. "You mean that you will be positively put out if we break say, a leg and a neck between us?" Janet inquired.

"Exactly—only, 'put out,' is too tame an expression. So see that you are careful, understand?" Tom was half in fun but also half in earnest, and the Twins nodded in understanding.

"We'll be careful, Tom, we promise," they said together, and Tom went off feeling a little more content, but still slightly apprehensive, for he knew that Beggar would let all his new friends see that Janet could out-ride them all, and in his heart of hearts, he was proud to think that she would do them all credit. Still he hoped she would stop short of recklessness. He was not worried about Phyllis, for he was sure that English would take care of her. Perhaps it was just as well that he could not look too far into the future.

The three girls started off with all five of the boys, as the plateau where Beggar was to lead his company was on the way to their various destinations, and they had decided, with Tom's

sanction, to stop for a few minutes and, as Circus said, "watch Beggar shot."

"Ugh! sounds like a hanging!" Daisy said when the phrase was repeated to her, "and I hate the thought."

"Why, darling, you sound just as though you had seen one," Janet exclaimed.

"I have," Daisy answered shortly.

"Oh, tell us about it," Janet insisted, but Phyllis shivered and pulled her horse over towards the big roan that English was riding.

"Oh, it was ages ago," Daisy replied; "I was only eight or nine and I was riding for the mail."

"Could you ride when you were eight?" Janet inquired.

"When I was five," Daisy laughed, glad to be interrupted.

But Janet wanted all the details of the hanging. Tommy might have given this as a fair example of the difference between his sisters, for where Janet turned with excited curiosity to everything that sounded like a thrilling adventure, Phyllis was apt to shudder and not wait to hear the end. Janet's earlier life had taught her to face realities, while Phyllis had always

been sheltered as far as possible from anything unpleasant. One loved the heroic and the other the gentle, yet they would both have resented such a comparison.

"Go on, you were riding for the mail," Janet prompted.

"Yes, and that was no small matter in those days, for the boxes were much farther off than they are now," Daisy continued, not altogether adverse to sharing a tragic picture that had haunted her all her life. "I was jogging along and not thinking of anything, when suddenly I came to a turn in the road, just about here, as I remember, and I looked up and saw the body of a man dangling, with a rope round his neck, from a bowlder just over my head. I can tell you I was terrified and so was my horse. We started for home and we never stopped until we got there."

Phyllis, who had heard some of the story, looked sick and caught her breath, and Janet exclaimed, "How ghast—" and stopped suddenly.

They had just turned a bend in the path that was leading steadily up onto the mésa, and directly before them, not two hundred yards away,

was the body of a man, hanging by a rope tied round his neck, over the side of the deep ravine beside which they were riding.

Daisy screamed and hid her face in her hands. The men brought their horses to a standstill. Janet stared in terror and thought she recognized Beggar's features in the distorted face of the dying man. Phyllis closed her eyes very tight and tried hard not to faint. English had his arm around her protectingly.

There was a deathlike silence, then a voice from far below them at the bottom of the ravine shouted, "All right, let her go!" and a man appeared above them and cut the rope that held the figure. A second later it was falling to the uttermost depths of the ravine, bumping harshly against the jagged rocks on its way.

"A dummy, can you beat that?" Circus broke the tense silence.

The rest looked down and beheld a man grinding at a camera some sixty feet below.

"Well, they've started the fun all right," said one of the other boys with a laugh; "but I thought they said shooting—not hanging!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE MOVIES

"AND quite the funniest part of it was that I was sure it was Beggar," Janet laughed. She had quite recovered from her shock, and was chatting with the pretty slip of a girl who was playing the leading rôle in the picture. They were all beginning to find it interesting.

"It is rather a good dummy," Miss Gregg replied nervously. Her mind was on the next event, where she was supposed to ride a very spirited horse at a breakneck speed. "I wish I could ride like you girls can," she added wistfully, for altogether she was a very wistful little person; "but I'm from the East and that makes a difference."

Janet laughed. "Well, we're not exactly Westerners ourselves," she said. "We were born in New England but we visited here three summers ago, and of course we rode all the time."

"You like it?" Miss Gregg's voice sounded very tired as she spoke, and Janet found herself being sorry for the girl whom, a minute before, she had been envying.

Phyllis and Daisy did not regain their breaths until long after Janet, being made of less stern stuff, but finally Phyllis, escorted by Beggar who thought she was Janet, came up to be introduced.

"Here's the finest little rider in the state," he announced; and Janet and Phyllis after exchanging glances burst out laughing.

"Why, Beggar, I thought you knew us apart!" Janet teased.

"Gracious, I'm not a bit surprised that he doesn't," Miss Gregg laughed; "I never saw two girls who looked so alike, and I've seen loads of twins, too." She looked from one to the other slowly. "How wonderfully you could double!"

Phyllis smiled, "We do sometimes," she said, "but not in the movies."

Miss Gregg looked puzzled and rather blank. Little interested her outside of her work. They were joined by the director and the camera man. Mr. Lewis, the director, was introduced, but he was a busy man and he wasted little time on formalities. He had a sharp voice, and barked out

a rasping "how do you do." Then he turned to Miss Gregg.

"We'll shoot that scene with you on horseback next, I guess," he said, and Janet, who was watching, saw the little actress tremble.

Mr. Lewis shouted to one of the boys, and he brought Miss Gregg's horse, a mean little pinto with a hard mouth. Miss Gregg was clothed in extravagantly Western riding clothes, but she looked and felt very ill at ease. She mounted the horse gingerly, and Mr. Lewis helped her into the saddle. By this time the camera man had his machine at a point of vantage along the path, and another camera was ready at the point where she started her ride.

"Off we go now, my dear," Mr. Lewis reminded her. "Remember now that as soon as you reach the place opposite Bill, you are to pull up and look down into the gorge, see Nat Hawkins's face staring up at you, and register relief and horror. Then we'll fade out, and that will be all right."

Miss Gregg nodded. She was biting her lip and trembling, but she started off bravely. Half-way down the rather treacherous path, she let her horse slacken his speed, and pick his way carefully among the rocks.

"That won't do," Mr. Lewis bellowed through a megaphone. "Your horse has got to gallop all the way to get a *contrast,* when you pull him up suddenly at the end."

This last instruction seemed to be too much for Miss Gregg. She tumbled off of her saddle, and threw herself on the rock beside the horse and cried.

"I am tired to death," she sobbed, when they went to her, "and I'm frightened half out of my wits. You can do anything you like, but I won't ride that horse."

Then Mr. Lewis started to bully, and Janet, who felt terribly sorry for the pathetic little figure, sobbing on the ground, walked up to him.

"What good do you think that's going to do?" she said coolly, "not a bit. She's in a funk, can't you see it?"

"My dear young lady," said Mr. Lewis coldly, "I do not object to your watching the picture, but I really must ask you not to interrupt."

Janet shrugged her shoulders, and walked away, but Phyllis took her place almost immediately, and Mr. Lewis thought it was Janet come back again.

"Why don't you let me double for Miss Gregg?"

she said, "and just take a back view? Nobody would know the difference." She was saying what she knew Janet wanted to say, for nothing on earth would have forced her to take that ride.

Mr. Lewis looked at her. "Why didn't you say so in the beginning?" he asked, but Phyllis only smiled her sweetest at him.

"Are you sure you can ride?" he inquired, and Beggar heard him. He looked at Phyllis and then at Janet, and then scratched his head puzzled. "If it's Janet, she can ride anything. If it's Phyllis, I wouldn't be so sure," he told the director.

"Very well, get over there behind that peak, and change duds, but hurry up, we haven't any time." He cast a baleful look at poor, trembling Miss Gregg.

"Phew!" Phyllis said, as she nodded at Janet to go ahead, and went back to Daisy herself. "I thought leading ladies had it all their own way, and that life was just one big box of bonbons and American Beauty roses. But I see where I am wrong."

Miss Gregg motioned to a large woman who had been standing in the background, a silent witness to the scene. "Jennie, where's my coat," she in-

quired, and the woman handed her a long worsted cape. She and Janet disappeared, and soon emerged, Janet in the clumsy riding clothes that are vainly supposed, throughout the world, to be Western, and Miss Gregg enveloped in her cape.

They were not at all unlike in stature, and when Janet pulled her hat down at a rakish angle over one eye, she could very well pass as the well-known little actress whom she was saving from a very disagreeable five minutes.

"I'll ride my own horse," Janet announced as they led the pinto up to her, "or I'll not ride any," she added with a well-calculated touch of temper that immediately subdued the director and made the rest of the company smile in admiration.

A delighted Beggar brought Booster to her, and after she had made a fine show of tightening his girth and examining his bridle, she mounted, the dazed director gave the word for the camera men to start and off she flew at a fast run, urging her pony on at every step.

They skirted the very edge of the ravine and just as they reached the second camera man, Janet pulled up Booster, and appeared to stare at the depths below and then covered her face with her hands. It was a clever trick, and none of the

thousands of movie fans who saw the picture all over the country ever guessed that the rider was other than their adored Peggy Gregg.

"Thank you, Miss Page, that was a very clever bit of riding, and I am only hoping the boys got it," Mr. Lewis said, and he wrung Janet's hand. "I had intended letting Miss Gregg take it on from where you drew up, but I'll take a close-up of her on your horse if I may, and I think it will fool them."

For the rest of the day Janet put on airs enough for the greatest actress in the world. Phyllis and Daisy felt very much out of it, and Phyllis declared that she was tired of explaining that Janet was her twin, and that whoever she was talking to had made a mistake.

"It was awful, Tom," Daisy teased, when they were all home at dinner that night. "Jan was so temperamental that poor little Miss Gregg didn't have a chance."

"You should have seen her directing the director. I will ride my horse or none at all"—and Phyllis imitated Janet's commanding air.

Janet eyed them coldly. "That was all done with a purpose," she told them. "If I had not been properly important and given myself airs,

that Mr. Lewis would have given me orders the way he does Miss Gregg, and I couldn't possibly have stood that. Besides, I thought that it might do her some good to be shown how to treat a man that is rude."

"Janet, Janet!" Auntie Mogs protested. "I hope you were not rude."

"Can a Queen be rude to her slave, Miss Carter?" English laughed. "I assure you, Janet behaved superbly."

"Thanks, English, I'm glad you still like me a little bit," Janet said humbly. "I didn't think you did any more."

"Oh, it was never that I loved Caesar the less," English told her laughing.

"Well I don't mind your loving Rome more," Janet teased and then there fell an embarrassed silence.

"And didn't they give you a chance to show off Phyl?" Tom asked breaking it.

"No, I merely basked in the reflected glory of Jan," Phyllis replied. "But then I'm used to that."

"Why, Phyl Page!" Janet objected.

The arrival of Sulky from Loophole interrupted

them. He walked over to Auntie Mogs and put a yellow envelope in her hand, then he slipped into his chair and nodded to the rest.

"Why, it's a wire from Mrs. Todd at last. I have been looking for it all day." Auntie Mogs opened it and read—

"God bless you for your invitation Peter and I arrive, Monday the 24 at Phœnix and will make best connection possible wiring you time. I will return in a week leaving Peter with you.

"ANN TODD"

Every one was delighted, but on Sulky and Janet's faces was a smile of perfect content.

"That's just bully!" Tom exclaimed; "and we'll keep Mrs. Todd longer than a week."

"That means that Peter is well enough to travel at any rate," Auntie Mogs said thankfully. "I was really worried about the dear boy."

"Tom, I think you and Janet and Auntie Mogs had better take the car and go to Phœnix," Daisy suggested. "It will be so much easier for Peter than the train."

Tom nodded. "I think you are right, dear, I'll see what I can do about it."

The conversation turned to other subjects.

"Oh, Uncle Pete, isn't it too wonderful for

words?'' Janet said as she swung herself up on one of the grain boxes in the barn.

''I sorter reckon it is, little lady,'' Sulky replied.

Janet kicked her feet for a few minutes in silence.

''What are you making?'' she inquired.

''A quoit for Peter,'' Sulky told her, and went on with his work.

CHAPTER XIV

PHYLLIS' CHANCE

"GOOD-BY, darling, and give my love to Peter the minute you see him getting off the train," Phyllis directed as she stood on the running-board for a last kiss from Janet.

"I will," Janet promised. "I hate leaving you. Please don't let anything happen until we get back."

"Good-by, Auntie Mogs."

"Good-by, dear child, do be careful."

"Take care of my family, English," Tom called, as Phyllis jumped off the running-board, and the car started in earnest.

"Terrible responsibility, old man, but I'll chance it," English replied.

He swung Tommy Junior to his shoulder so that he could wave a last farewell, and then he and Phyllis wandered off towards the corral, and

Daisy took her small son into the house for the morning nap.

"Let's go and find Beggar, on location, this afternoon," Phyllis suggested.

"That ought to be easy," English agreed. "They are taking some pictures along the road to Loophole, daring automobile rescue, I believe. We'll ride over if you like."

Phyllis had pricked up her ears at the mention of an automobile, but she did not say anything to English. Instead she got her hat and helped him saddle the horses.

It was a beautiful day. The whole atmosphere seemed to be a brilliant sapphire blue, as though the sky had left the earth some of its radiance. They rode along in silence, both too happy to talk. They had not gone very far however, before they saw Beggar, in violent argument with Mr. Lewis.

They soon discovered what the trouble was. The scene called for Beggar to ride along at a gallop on his horse and jump into the car that Miss Gregg was driving. It was not a difficult feat, for they were to do it slowly and then run the film at double speed. But it seemed that Miss Gregg was frightened, and that the first time they had

tried it, she had run into Beggar's favorite horse and barked his shins.

Beggar would not risk it again, and Miss Gregg was in tears. When Phyllis rode up, Beggar greeted her with heartfelt relief.

"I was just coming for you," he exclaimed. "You're Phyllis, aren't you? My own special pal?"

Phyllis nodded and laughed. "Yes, Jan has driven over to Phœnix. Did you want her to do some more riding for you?" she asked mischievously.

"Not to-day," Beggar told her. "We're figuring on you, this time."

Up to this point English had been a silent listener, but now he interrupted Beggar.

"No you don't," he said positively. "I am in charge of this young lady while Tom's away, and I don't intend to have her risking her neck."

"Why, English, how perfectly silly!" Phyllis exclaimed. "Of course I'll do what you want, Beggar, don't pay any attention to English."

Phyllis waited for English to protest. She fully intended giving in to him, in the end, but she wanted to tease. Imagine her dismay, when English, without another word but with a very injured

expression in his eyes, shrugged his shoulders and walked away. Phyllis felt particularly small. She wanted to call him back and promise anything, but her pride made her turn to Beggar.

"Come along, what is it you want me to do?" she inquired brusquely.

Beggar explained, and in a very few minutes it was an accomplished fact. It only necessitated some straightaway driving at a fair pace, with a steady hand. The "rescue" was made in a few minutes, and again the relieved director expressed his thanks—but this time to the other twin.

"I knew you could do it," Beggar exulted. "Didn't I teach you to drive that car, or one like it? Bet I did, and I am considerable of a teacher."

But somehow Phyllis had not enjoyed her share of triumph as Janet had. All she could see was English, waiting impassive on his horse, and she wanted the earth to swallow her up.

Without a word she mounted Booster, and with a nod to Beggar and the rest she started for home. Then something happened, a little thing that looked as if the Fates had decided to interfere. As Phyllis wheeled her pony around to head for the ranch, the man who was driving the car let it

back-fire. Booster, who was a sedate and well-behaved pony, did not run or rear up on his hind legs, but he did throw his head in the air and by so doing caught Phyllis under her chin. She had been leaning over to fasten her boots. The impact was violent and for a minute she felt as though all her teeth were knocked out. She put her hand to her chin and with the other tried to steady Booster.

English was beside her in an instant. His steadying hand made the pony quiet in a second, and one arm went around Phyllis and she put her head on his shoulder and cried, for the pain was really great.

They took her home in the car, and Daisy put her to bed and sent for the doctor. When he came he found there were no bones broken, but the jaw was slightly dislocated. He left directions and sent out a filled prescription from Loophole with English, who had ridden in with him.

Daisy made the most adorable nurse, and while the pain was really severe, Phyllis did not mind just lying in bed and being petted. But that night she felt better and she grew very restless.

"I'm sick of bed," she announced crossly.

"Poor darling, of course you are." Daisy was

all concern for her patient. "Perhaps you would like to sit up, it might ease your chin."

Phyllis nodded. "I'm fearfully hot, too," she complained.

"Perhaps you'd be cooler on the porch," Daisy suggested, and Phyllis agreed with alacrity.

Daisy dresed her in one of her thinnest frocks, fixed her hair by tying it loosely with a black ribbon, and then went to call one of the boys to move the living-room wicker lounge onto the piazza.

Of course the first one she met was English. He had not left the near vicinity of the house all day, in case he might be wanted, and he and Daisy fixed all the sofa cushions for Phyllis' comfort. When she came out, he was waiting with the softest one for her head.

When she was comfortably settled he sat down on the edge of the piazza with his back against one of the pillars. They did not speak for a long time and then Phyllis whispered softly:

"English, have you forgiven me?"

English knelt beside her and held her hand. "There is nothing in the world I wouldn't forgive you, Phyllis," he said seriously. "But I've not yet forgiven myself."

Phyllis sighed contentedly. "But you have nothing to forgive yourself," she told him. "It was all that man's fault. Wouldn't Janet have been furious at his stupidity! And you know, English, it might have happened, even if I hadn't driven the car. It really hadn't anything to do with my disobeying orders, had it?"

"No, of course not," English agreed. "But I wish we had stayed home," he finished miserably.

"I don't," Phyllis replied with conviction, and she added to herself that as soon as she was able she would give Booster all the sugar in the house for so badly bruising her chin; for she knew that without that little accident, English would probably have stayed cross with her, and she could think of nothing she would hate more than his disapproval.

At that very same moment in Phœnix, Janet sat up in bed and said to Auntie Mogs, "Well, whatever it was that was the matter with Phyl, she is all right now," and then she rolled over and went to sleep.

Peter and Mrs. Todd arrived the next morning. Janet insisted on being at the station long before the train was due. She walked up and down the platform, and finally discovered the old Indian

woman who was one of her first recollections of Arizona. She was in the midst of a talk with her, when the train arrived.

No one could doubt that Peter had been ill. He looked tired and very thin, but his smile was the same, and he shook Janet's hand with all his old-time fervor.

Mrs. Todd was the same determined woman who had first spoken to Janet years before, in the Old Chester Post-Office. She greeted Auntie Mogs and Tom, and then turned to Janet.

"Well, Janet child, this *is* a nice surprise! Peter has been bemoaning the fact that he had to wait until evening to see you. I was really afraid that he would start a temperature, but now do look at him!"

"Nan, a station platform is no place to get even with you, but just you wait." Peter was not at all embarrassed. "As for being impatient to see the Princess, I should say I was. Who wouldn't be? Look at her!"

Janet was well worth looking at, at that moment. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes sparkled.

"Well, perhaps Janet will stop worrying about Phyl," Tom said as he helped them into the car.

"She made up her mind yesterday that something was wrong, and she has had poor Auntie Mogs frantic."

"All right," Janet replied as she snuggled down in her seat beside Peter. "You just wait until we get home and see."

That evening as they all sat around Phyllis' couch on the piazza, Janet demanded—"What did I tell you? I knew she'd been hurt."

"It's extraordinary," Auntie Mogs replied; "but, darling, you told me just before you went to sleep, that she was all right."

Janet looked confused. "I know, about nine-thirty," she said. "I suddenly felt that she was all right."

"And so I was," Phyllis agreed, "just at nine-thirty. I remember, the clock struck," she added, and looked at English with an impish expression in her eyes.

"We're twins you see," Janet explained, and the rest had to accept her explanation.

CHAPTER XV

THE MOVIES OPEN

"PHYL, I do think it's a shame you can't go to-night," Janet said at dinner a few days later. She was speaking of the important event that was to take place that night in Loophole, the opening of the new Motion Picture Palace on Main Street. Loophole was greatly excited, for it was the first one to open in the tiny place, and the excitement had spread to the Twin Star Ranch.

Phyllis still wore a bandage around her chin, but her spirits were so high that it was impossible to think of her as being ill.

"Thank you, darling, but I really don't mind as long as you tell me all about it."

"I think it would do you good, Phyl," Peter insisted; "though I must say, you don't need much cheering up."

"I'd adore to go," Phyllis replied; "but I know

they would put me out as soon as they saw me. I'll stay home and take care of Tommy Junior."

"And I will stay with you." Mrs. Todd spoke from the other end of the table. "Nothing could induce me to go anywhere to-night. I was out in the garden for only a minute or two, and the sun has given me the most terrible headache."

And so it was arranged. The rest left in the car or on horseback, while Phyllis and Mrs. Todd settled down for a nice comfortable evening. Mrs. Todd had changed into a dressing-gown and came back into the living-room where Phyllis was writing letters.

"Phyllis child," Mrs. Todd spoke in her usual brisk way as she settled herself in a big chair, "who is that charming man you all call English?"

Phyllis looked up from the desk and smiled, but before she could give an answer there came from the kitchen such a blood-curdling groan they were both on their feet in an instant.

"Mercy! what do you suppose that was?" Mrs. Todd demanded.

"José,—somebody must be murdering him!" Phyllis had hardly replied, when the groan was repeated with a sort of finishing wail.

They dashed towards the kitchen and found

José doubled up in the corner by the stove. He was rocking to and fro, and every now and then he would groan again.

"Mercy man! what's the matter with you?" Mrs. Todd demanded.

"Me bad pain," José told her rolling his eyes around. "Me die."

"Nonsense, you are not going to do any such thing," Phyllis told him. "What's the trouble?"

"Oh, very bad pain," José reiterated.

"What have you been eating?" Mrs. Todd demanded.

"Nothing, me just going to die," José told her but her quick eye had noticed an empty bottle on the table. It was not a very big bottle, but it had a very large neck, and Phyllis suddenly remembered that José was very fond of maraschino cherries, with which he sometimes made what he called swell desserts.

"José, did you eat all of these to-night?" she demanded.

"Yes, very bad pain and I am going to die." José was something of a fatalist.

"I never heard of cherries killing any one yet," Mrs. Todd laughed. "Just you wait a minute,

and I'll give you something to make you feel better. But for goodness sake don't groan like that again."

Phyllis heated some water, and Mrs. Todd came back with some digestive tablets. They made José take them with plenty of hot water, although he protested that nothing that tasted as bad as that could do anything but kill a man.

In the midst of the excitement Tommy Junior woke up and demanded to know what the trouble was. Phyllis tried to pacify him, but he was thoroughly wide awake.

"Bring him into the living-room, it won't hurt him just this once, and I'll get a chance to play with him," Mrs. Todd, of whom Tommy Junior had made a willing slave, begged, and Phyllis, only too glad of an excuse, carried him in on her back.

"Where's my muvver?" he inquired blinking at the light.

"Mother will be back soon," Phyllis promised. "Shall Phyl build you a nice house with your blocks?"

"No, I want my muvver," Tommy insisted.

"Oh don't cry," Mrs. Todd besought him. "Come and say hello to me."

Tommy Junior looked at her through heavy-lidded eyes. "Do, Nan," he said.

"You precious child!" Mrs. Todd exclaimed.

Tommy began to cry. "I want my muvver, my daddy, and Ding," he persisted.

"Can't we give him Ding. Do you know what it means?" Mrs. Todd asked anxiously of Phyllis.

"That's what he calls English Kedgeree," Phyllis explained.

Tommy nodded his head. "Tommy wants Ding," he said and dug his little fist into his eye.

"Dear child," Mrs. Todd protested, "don't do that or you'll put your eye out."

Tommy looked at her with scorn and stopped crying long enough to reply, "I've got another eye."

Mrs. Todd laughed heartily. They did everything in their power to stop his tears, but to no avail. Phyllis could see that Mrs. Todd's headache was steadily growing worse, and she insisted that she go to bed at once.

"What Tommy Junior needs is discipline," she said, "and I am going to see that he goes to sleep at once."

It sounded very well, and Mrs. Todd, who was

really ill, went off thankfully to bed, and Phyllis bore the shrieking Tommy Junior to his own room. Then the tussle began.

"I want Ding. Why doesn't he come?" Tommy wailed.

"Because he is at Loophole with Muvver and Dad," Phyllis explained for the hundredth time.

"I want Ding."

"Go to sleep, darling."

"Want Ding to put me to sleep."

"But Ding's away."

"Tommy wants Ding."

"Shall Phyl tell you a story about the elephant?"

"No."

There was silence, and in the distance Phyllis could hear the thud of a horse's hoofs. Tommy Junior heard it too.

"Ding!" he shouted, his little voice carrying far into the night. "I want Ding."

"What's all this?" English's voice came through the open window.

"Ding!" Tommy shouted joyfully.

"Oh, English, I'm so glad to see you!" Phyllis exclaimed. "Tommy simply won't go to sleep." And she recounted the adventures of the evening.

"Are the rest on the way?" she inquired when Tommy was peaceful in English's arms.

"No, indeed, they won't be back for hours," English told her. "There is a dance to follow the picture, and they are staying for it. I came back," he continued, answering a question in Phyllis' eyes, "because I didn't like to think of you here alone with that idiot of a José."

"Ding came back to Tommy—José dot a tummy-ache." Tommy Junior was awake again and he prattled on. "I wanted Ding. Didn't you Phyl?"

"That's something Ding would give a good deal to know, old man," English replied softly and looked at Phyllis who was blushing hotly.

"Not just the same way," she replied with her own little smile and waited. But, as always happened, a hurt look came into English's eyes and he turned his attention to Tommy Junior.

"Ding take Tommy piggy back," Tommy demanded.

"No, Tommy's going to sleep," English replied.

"No, no!"

"Very well, look here, here's the clock. You watch it until that hand gets to there, and then

the fairies will make the bell ring, and then Ding will take you piggy back, but you must watch it every minute, just stare at it hard."

He put the clock beside the bed, and Tommy thinking it was a new game stared hard at the black hand. Then his eyes seemed to lose their focus and his heavy lids drooped, he opened them resolutely only to be overcome with drowsiness, and finally he dropped off to sleep.

English and Phyllis went out to the piazza and sat down on the steps. They did not say very much, for they were busy with their own thoughts.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BIG DAY

"WELL, Princess," Peter pushed back his chair from the table and looked across at Janet, "are we going to help Uncle Pete decorate the corral this morning?"

"No, not exactly," Janet replied. "I am going to help, and you are going to sit in the shade and give helpful suggestions."

"Now look here, infant," Peter tipped Janet's chair almost over backwards, so that he could look down into her face. "Once and for all, I want it clearly understood that I am no longer on the sick list."

"Dear Peter, why argue?" Phyllis teased. "You know you will end by doing just as Jan says."

"I will do no such thing," Peter denied. "I

may be her willing slave, but there are limits," he ended ominously.

"Are there, Peter?" Janet asked softly, and she looked up into his eyes with such a tantalizing expression that Peter groaned.

"Pax!" he cried. "I am even as you say, your devoted slave, do with me as you wish."

"Why, Peter, I never said you were my slave, are you?" Janet asked impishly.

"It's no use, old man," English laughed. "You might just as well surrender your guns and all your ammunition. You're beaten."

"Not without a struggle," Peter replied, and without a word he picked Janet up in his arms and carried her out to the barn, despite her most violent protests.

Phyllis and English followed them. They found all of the men busy hanging up flags, and the tack heads answered to the hammer to a sort of little tune.

It was a week since Peter had arrived, and to the family it seemed as though he had been part of the Twin Star Outfit always, for it was impossible to think of life without him. He was the best of company, and he and Janet romped through the days like two overgrown puppies.

Mrs. Todd, too, had been prevailed upon to stay by Tom and Daisy, who seemed to grow happier every day with so much company about her. She dreaded the time when they would all leave. As for Tom, he was watching events shape themselves, and as day after day passed the smile on his usually serious face broadened.

Peter liked all the men and was in turn accepted for his own sake, as well as his father's of whom they had all heard. Sulky was his chosen companion when Janet was with him, but between him and English there had sprung up a very real friendship. They had taken some long rides together, and it was noticeable on their return that the bond was strengthened.

Janet was delighted, but Phyllis was singularly reticent when English's name was spoken, and for the first time in her life, since Janet had come into it, she was keeping something from her twin.

To-day the Twin Stars was entertaining all the neighborhood, and the guests of honor were to be the Moving Picture Company who wanted some pictures of bronco breaking for the film they were taking. Beggar had insisted, and rightly, that nowhere in the state were there such riders as on

his own ranch. The contest to-day was the result of his boast.

Tom found English alone in the bunkhouse, just before luncheon. He was the picture of misery. He was sitting with his head in his hands on the edge of his bunk.

"What's the matter with you?" Tom asked cheerily. "You haven't been following José's example and gorging on cherries, have you?"

English looked up at the sound of his voice, and there was so much real suffering in his face, that Tom ceased to smile and asked gravely—

"What's up?"

"Tom, old man, I'm going to light out," English said desperately. "I've tried not to let this thing get the better of me, but it's no good. The best thing for me to do is to be off, and as soon as possible."

"Hum," Tom scratched his head. "I'd give a good deal to understand just what you are driving at. I know it has something to do with Phyl, but just what, I don't know."

"Well, I'll tell you," English said desperately. "I have fallen in love with her."

"Well, and by the looks of it she doesn't seem

to object. You don't mean to tell me that she has turned you down?"

English looked at him incredulously. "Do you think that I would presume to ask Phyllis to marry me?" he demanded.

Tom laughed, "Well I don't see just why not, provided you want her."

"But I'm not worthy to tie her shoe-strings," English said hotly. "What am I? A cowman, with no money and no prospects of getting any, and you ask me why I don't propose to the most wonderful woman in the world."

Tom turned on him and simulated an anger he was far from feeling.

"All I ask you is, why do you make that same wonderful girl unhappy by refusing to tell her what she has a right to know—that the man she loves, loves her. You are an able-bodied man with a brain. Can't you make money?"

English stood up. "Tom, have I your permission to ask Phyllis to marry me?" he demanded.

Tom took his hand and wrung it. "You have, and if she refuses you, I'll be tempted to spank her. I don't want to be partial, old man, and I am devoted to Peter Gibbs, but I would rather

have you for a brother-in-law than any man I know. Now go and find the future Mrs. Kedgeree, and don't let her say no," and Tom was gone.

English, who thought he was dreaming, shook himself to make sure he was not and started for the house. On the way he met Phyllis. She was walking towards the corral with Beggar and Miss Gregg. He could see Auntie Mogs was still on the piazza with Mrs. Todd.

"Phyl," he called. "Where will you be fifteen minutes from now?"

"At the corral watching them try to ride the new bad horse that Beggar has found," she replied wonderingly.

"Well, don't go away," English called and walked on.

Peter was on the piazza too, and just as English was going to ask Auntie Mogs if he might have a few minutes of her time alone, Mrs. Todd called to him:

"Oh Mr. Kedgeree, we've been hunting for you, please come and talk to us."

"Can I do something for you?" English asked, impatient of any delay.

"Indeed yes. Peter and I want you to come

back East with us and show us how to make a success of our sheep farm. So far we have had nothing but failure."

"I know it's an awful thing to ask a cowman to raise sheep," Peter laughed; "and only Nan would have the courage. Will you come? We'll work on shares, you know, and—" Peter launched into a perfect deluge of statistics.

"Don't give us your answer now," he finished. "Take time and think it over."

English laughed, "All right, if you don't want it now," he said.

"You'll come! you nice man!" Mrs. Todd said delightedly.

English nodded, and he and Peter shook hands, then he turned to Miss Carter.

She smiled at him as only Miss Carter could smile. "Are congratulations in order, English?" she asked.

"Why—why, then you know?" English stammered.

"Yes, Tom told us on his way to the corral. He was almost as delighted as I was," she added with a gentle smile.

"Oh!" was all English could say.

"It will be some partnership," Peter laughed;

"for of course you know I am going to marry Jan, that was decided years ago, only I have never gotten up the courage to tell her so."

"Hurry, you people, everything has begun," Circus called, as he came towards them from the direction of the corral. "They sent me to round you up."

Mrs. Todd got her sunshade, and with Auntie Mogs and Peter and English, they hurried to the gates where a rude grandstand had been erected.

There was only room for the ladies, so the boys hung over the fence and watched. Jim had just successfully thrown the rather savage horse that was waiting to be broken to the bridle. He was struggling to put his saddle on. From two sides of the corral the cameras clicked busily.

The saddle was soon on, and the horse got to his feet and started kicking furiously. Jim managed to get on his back, but was almost immediately thrown to the ground. At this moment Tommy Junior with a yell of pure delight, trotted into the open space and straight for the horse and the beast made straight for him.

There was a stifled scream for the fraction of a minute, and then English was swinging to the horse's neck in an endeavor to throw him. Tom

leaped to his small son and whisked him away. The horse snorted angrily and kicked at English. When he had him prone on the ground he started to savage him. The men stood irresolute for a second, and then came the unexpected crack of a gun. The beast rolled over and pawed the air ineffectually, and the men ran to English who lay unconscious, covered with blood.

Janet put her arm around Phyllis and tried to make her look the other way, but after one little scream, Phyllis did not make a sound, she looked at the dreadful sight before her and turned a ghastly white.

Very gently they bore English to the house, and Tom directed them to put him in the Twins' room. There was no doubt in any one's mind that he was dead. He lay very still, and his face was badly cut by the sharp hoofs of the horse.

Fortunately the doctor was among the invited guests, and with Auntie Mogs and Mrs. Todd to help him, he made a thorough examination of English's body and declared that he would live, and that his injuries were less severe than he had expected.

This was welcome news to the group who stood

in the living-room. Daisy had Tommy in her arms, and Tom stood beside Phyllis and Janet.

"Who shot that brute?" he asked.

"Sulky," Peter told him. "What aim! If he hadn't killed him instantly it would have been worse for old English than it was." They looked around the group of men that were waiting near the door, but Sulky was not with them.

The first person that the doctor met as he left the room was Sulky. He was standing waiting with his hands clenched. Of all the men at the ranch it is safe to say that Sulky liked English the best, and his face showed his anxiety as he waited for word.

The doctor put his hand on his shoulder. "Buck up, man," he said, "he's going to be all right, thanks to you."

Sulky's big frame seemed to crumple up, and he lunged out of the house which suddenly seemed to stifle him.

The doctor walked on to the living-room. Phyllis took a step towards him and then seemed to lose her courage.

"I can't bear it," she said and without warning she fell headlong.

"Here, here!" said the doctor, "don't do that. English is all right, my dear."

The rest sighed their relief, and Janet and the doctor managed to bring Phyllis to.

"English," was the first word she said.

"He's all right, darling," Janet assured her.

Phyllis got up. "I want to see," she said.

"All right, come along with me. If the wind lies in the direction I think it does, you're the best person for him to see when he comes to anyway." The doctor led the way, and Phyllis followed.

"Tommy, when I think—" Daisy began, but Tom stopped her.

"Daisy dear, that is one thing you must not think about," he said gently.

Daisy nodded. "But how can I help it?" she asked.

"Well, anyhow, it's not good for Tommy to hear about it," Janet added. "Come on, Peter, let's take him out to see the bunnies."

Daisy saw the sense in this suggestion, and let him out of her arms.

"Let's go and see about some food. Everybody will suddenly realize how hungry they are, now that the tension is over," said the practical Tom, and he and Daisy made their way to the kitchen,

where José was wringing his hands and imploring all the gods of his Indian fathers as well as those of his Mexican mother to save "the brave English."

Janet and Peter were visible through the door. They had Tommy between them, and it was evident that they were listening to his graphic description of the day that he was lost, when he was only pretending to be a bunny.

Phyllis was on her knees beside English, and Auntie Mogs and Mrs. Todd moved over to the window. English was hardly recognizable under all his many bandages, but the hand that lay outside the covers was uninjured and Phyllis stroked it gently.

English stirred and opened his eyes.

"Phyllis," he said softly.

"Yes, English, I am here," Phyllis replied.

English made a great effort to remember. "Tommy Junior," he said and tried to sit up.

"Don't dear, don't," Phyllis exclaimed. "Tommy is all right. You saved him."

"Where is he?" English demanded.

"Out in the garden," Phyllis told him.

"I want to see him," English insisted.

"But he may tire you."

"No, please."

"You're sure you can stand it?"

"Yes, I can't rest until I see he is really all right."

Without a word Phyllis started to get up from her knees, but English's hand detained her.

"Can't some one else find him, I'm afraid to let you go," he said.

Mrs. Todd heard, and hurried out of the room. She returned in a few minutes with Tommy in her arms.

"Remember, darling, you promised to be quiet," she warned.

Tommy Junior looked very wise and very concerned. "Poor Ding," he said softly, "Tommy sorry."

English did not speak, but his soul was in his eyes, and his face showed the thankfulness and relief he felt.

Then followed days of convalescence. Phyllis and Janet moved into Peter's room, and Peter went out to the bunkhouse. English was a very sick man for many days, but he had such devoted nurses that he was obliged, out of common gratitude, to get well.

It was Phyllis to whom he turned for everything. She made an excellent nurse, even better than Janet had the last time English had been a patient. But although he turned to her for everything, still he did not ask her the question that was uppermost in his mind.

"What's the matter with you now?" Tom demanded one day when he was alone with him.

"Oh you don't need to tell me" he interrupted, as English started to reply. "I know just what is going on in that head of yours. But it's all nonsense. Man alive, if we thought a lot of you before this, what do you think we think now? I haven't tried to tell you, because I couldn't. You've saved the most precious thing on earth to me from a horrible death, and well—"

"Oh, cut it, old man," English interrupted. "I don't suppose that any of you have taken into consideration that I was pretty keen on the little nipper myself," he finished.

"Then what—" Tom began.

English laughed, "Pride," he announced. "How do you expect a man to propose when his face is all swathed in bandages?"

Tom laughed so hard at this reply, so unexpec-

tedly coming from English, that Phyllis, who was passing the door at this moment, came in and reprimanded him severely, little knowing that she was the innocent cause.

CHAPTER XVII

TOMMY JUNIOR'S FIRST LESSON

"THE only thing that worries me is that Tommy Junior will be afraid of horses for the rest of his life."

Tom looked at his small son, who was contentedly waving his egg-spoon in the air, and calling lustily to José for toast. He was truly worried, for it would indeed be a shame if the future owner of the Twin Star Ranch should be afraid of a horse.

Daisy looked up from her plate, and eyed her husband apprehensively. "I hope he is, Tom," she said. "I hope he runs at the very sight of one. I should never know a minute's peace if I ever knew he was near one again."

"My dear, don't be ridiculous. If Tommy is afraid of horses, and he has every reason to be, poor little mite, it's our duty to get him over that fear as quickly as possible."

Daisy looked as if she were going to rebel for the fraction of a minute, then her face cleared. With a tiny little sigh, she nodded. She had never had cause to doubt Tom's judgment in the past, and she was willing now to trust him with the dearest thing on earth.

The Twins were not so complacent, however.

"Tom, you are a brute!" Phyllis blazed, "how can you let the child run another risk?"

"Hush," Janet warned, "don't talk that way before the child. You will have him terrified. Besides, Phyl, Tom is right. It is much better to get him over his terrible fright now than to let it get a hold on him."

"You are right, little lady," Sulky nodded approval. "It's like being thrown. If you can persuade a man that has had a spill to get on a horse's back the same day, he gets over the idea that he's just got to get spilled every time he is in the saddle. But let him wait a few days, and he's scared clean through for good."

"Same with drowning," Circus Bailey added sagely, and the rest laughed.

"I suppose if you were drowned, the best thing to do would be to go in swimming quick as soon as you get to heaven, eh, Circus?" Screw Williams

inquired, apparently with deep interest, "A little dip in the Milky Way!"

"Aw, shucks," Circus replied. "You think you are awfully funny, don't you?"

"I know exactly what Circus means," Auntie Mogs came to the rescue. "He means, if you are very nearly drowned, the best thing is to go back in the water that very day."

"Thank you, ma'am," Circus nodded gratefully. "That's just what I mean, but this coyote here don't understand plain English."

"You said drowned," Screw defended. "I'll leave it to the others if you didn't. I just wanted to be sure of what you meant, Circus, because everything that falls from your lips is like pearls."

"Humph," Circus grunted in reply.

Now that the conversation was carefully diverted into more cheerful channels, Tom did not return to the original idea. But Phyllis knew that Daisy was thinking of it continually. So after breakfast, when Tommy was playing contentedly on the porch at Auntie Mogs' feet, she went to Daisy.

"Look here, sister of mine," she began. "You and I haven't had a really good ride together since

I got here, and I promised English that I would go out for the whole morning. He thinks I look tired, which is silly, but of course I'll have to go. Come with me won't you?"

Daisy put her arm around Phyllis. "I'd adore to go with you, Phyl. I want to talk to you anyway about a scheme I have in mind."

"Good, I'll get into my habit."

A little later saw them both riding off in the direction of Daisy's old home, and the golden head and the brown one were bobbing in earnest conversation.

"Have you never done anything with your old house?" Phyllis was asking.

"No, but I'm crazy to," Daisy admitted. "If we only had some extra money, but things have been rather bad on the ranch this year, and Tommy Junior needs so many things."

"Tell me what you want to do," Phyllis replied.

"I want to turn it into a school for the children around this neighborhood. There are quite a lot of them, and they have to trudge miles every morning, or else ride, and some of them are too little to go, and some of them can't be spared for the whole day. Tom thinks it would be a good

idea, but doesn't know any more than I do where the money is to come from."

"Make Loophole give it to you," Phyllis said, but Daisy laughed.

"Loophole never parts with a cent, and certainly wouldn't on such a fangdangled idea as this," she replied. "No, I want this to be really mine. I would save the household money, but it wouldn't be fair to skimp the boys on food."

"Oh, well," Phyllis replied, "maybe something will turn up. Tell Auntie Mogs. She's sure to think of something. Would it need a tremendous lot?"

"Not very much to start," Daisy replied, as they drew up at the shack.

They got off, disappeared, and for an hour or more planned and plotted as to how they could turn the crazy little dwelling into a schoolhouse.

Back at the ranch, Tommy Junior was having his first riding lesson. No need of Phyllis to tell Janet why she was taking Daisy for a ride. Janet knew only too well, and so when they were well out of sight she suggested to Tom and Sulky that they take Tommy to the corral. Auntie Mogs and Mrs. Todd protested faintly, but gave up when

Tom explained the common sense of the affair.

"Very well," said Auntie Mogs, "but, Tom, Daisy will never forgive us if anything happens to that baby."

"Nothing can, Auntie Mogs, I promise you," Tom assured her.

Sulky swung Tommy Junior high on his shoulder, and walked leisurely with him towards the corral. Peter followed with Janet and Tom. Auntie Mogs and Mrs. Todd watched them go, and then went in to sit beside English who wanted to talk about Phyllis, but didn't quite dare.

Tommy thoroughly enjoyed the ride on Sulky's back, and though they watched him carefully he seemed to have no qualms about entering the corral. They had a mild horse saddled and waiting. It was the one Auntie Mogs usually rode, and was warranted not to leave a walk, unless strenuously urged from behind.

"Well, old man," Sulky surprised Tommy by putting him on the horse's back before he knew what he was doing, "how do you like that? There's a horse for you all to yourself."

Tommy Junior surveyed the smiling faces about him, and gurgled with delight. "Tommy big

man," he announced, "make him go," and he beat the horse's neck with his tiny fists.

Sulky roared with laughter, and Tom's smile was full of pride as he gazed at his son. Apparently, a little thing like being grabbed from death from under a horse's hoofs was not sufficient to frighten Tommy permanently. The procession started and they walked round and round the corral. The only signs of tears that Tommy showed were when the horse came to a standstill. Finally he was persuaded by Janet to get down, and go and tell Ding all about it. This suggestion filled him with glee, and he trotted into the house, trailing Sulky's black snake whip with him, which was almost as big as he was, but he bore it manfully.

"Oh, Ding, Tommy Junior rode big horse today all round and round and round *thawl,*" which was as near as he could get to corral. He was in the midst of his excited description when Phyllis and Daisy appeared at the door. No one heard them, so they had full advantage of Tommy's own description of the adventure.

Daisy turned to Phyllis. "So that's why you took me riding, you wretch!" and she laughed

her relief. It was almost as if she had been persuaded to mount a horse, instead of Tommy Junior.

Tom looked up and saw them. "Madam," he said, crossing his arms against his great chest, "My son would have you know that he is by now an experienced horseman," and at his enormous pride the rest laughed merrily.

CHAPTER XVIII

PETER AND JANET

PETER came into the living-room and found Janet on her hands and knees while Tommy Junior sat astride her back, kicking and crowing lustily.

Ever since the week before, when he had had his first lesson in riding, he had demanded every minute to be on a horse. This morning it was raining, and Janet was offering the best substitute she could think of.

Peter stood at the door aghast. Then without a word he picked Tommy up, and put him on his own shoulder.

"Look here, sport," he protested, "you know you mustn't kick your Aunt Jan like that. I can't have it."

Tommy looked at him wide-eyed and serious. Then a broad smile and a roguish twinkle of his eyes took the place of the seriousness, and he thumped Peter unmercifully on the head.

"Peter horse, giddap!" he shouted, and Peter ran around the room with him a couple of times, knowing full well that his more strenuous imitation would disgust the boy forever with the more gentle Janet.

"Peter, that's not fair, you're stealing my thunder," Janet complained. "He will never want to ride piggy back with me any more at all."

"That's exactly what I mean him not to," Peter told her sternly. "You may not have any more respect for your ribs than to allow them to be kicked, but I have."

"Well, I like that," Janet was half amused and half angry. "If I can't take my own nephew for a ride, I don't know who can."

"Peter can," Tommy answered unexpectedly, and dug his small toes into Peter's side.

"No, Tommy's got to be a good boy for a few minutes while I talk to Jan," Peter explained.

But Tommy Junior would have none of it. His little nose wrinkled, his mouth puckered, and signs of a storm threatened. "I want to ride a horse!" Tommy wailed, and put out two chubby arms beseechingly to Janet.

Janet took him in triumph, and would have let

Tommy Junior sat astride her back, kicking and crowing lustily

him kick her to his heart's content had not Phyllis intervened.

"Phyl, Phyl!" Tommy, always fickle where the Twins were concerned, ran to Phyllis, and hugged her around the knees, almost upsetting her. Phyllis ran her fingers through his curly golden hair, and looked at Janet and Peter.

"What's the trouble?" she inquired laughing.

"Oh, Peter, as usual," Janet informed her.

"Not a bit of it, but I ask you, Phyllis, man to man, could I stand by and watch Janet being kicked by this young ruffian, without protesting?"

"Are you speaking of my nephew?" Phyllis inquired with pretended indignation. "I won't have him talked of so disrespectfully. You don't appreciate him, sir. Come along with Phyl, darling, and we'll go in and say hello to Ding."

Tommy was delighted. "Poor Ding," he said sympathetically, "poor Ding's sick. Tommy will kiss him and make him well."

They went off hand in hand.

Janet sat upon the window seat, and deliberately turned her back upon Peter, and gazed out upon the desolate landscape. Peter went to her, and took her by the shoulders, and made her turn around and look at him.

"Princess, you are stubborn," he told her. "Come along and 'fess up that it was rather painful having Tommy digging his toes into your ribs, and say politely. 'You are right, Peter. I apologize for being so rude.'"

Janet laughed at the very idea of such an admission. "Indeed, I will do no such thing," she said.

"Very well, then, you are in disgrace until you apologize." Peter walked over to a comfy chair, selected a book from the table, sat down and appeared to be reading. Janet watched him and the rain alternately.

Finally she said in her most wheedling tone. "Peter." But Peter went on reading. Janet stamped her foot. "Peter Gibbs." No answer, There was a pause for a few minutes. Then Janet got up, and making an elaborate courtesy, held her starched white linen dress as far out as possible, and whispered demurely, "I'm sorry, Peter."

Peter took one of her hands, raised her to her feet and bowed ceremoniously. "Your apology is accepted, madam. We can now resume diplomatic relations."

"Well then," said Janet, "the first thing for

you is to think of something exciting to do. I'm bored to death, and somehow the house seems awfully stuffy."

Peter stretched his long thin legs. "I'd like to go for a walk," he said. "I'm tired to death of riding horseback, fun though it is. I'd like a good tramp."

"In this downpour?" Janet inquired.

Together they looked out of the window, and it did look as though anything that ventured out would be sure to be beaten down by the great sheets of rain that were falling. It was an Arizona rain, the sort of rain that seems to say, "This is the end. I will stop of nothing short of a flood," and then coyly to turn around and in less time than it takes to tell it, break up and show the blue sky, and the sun.

Suddenly Janet said, "I'll go with you. I have stout boots, slicker and a sou'wester, and I'll stump you to walk to the mail-boxes and back."

"All right," Peter agreed. "We had better dodge Nan and Auntie Mogs. They might not approve of our wild venture."

A few minutes later, José held up his hands in despair as the two rain-coated figures stole out through the kitchen and made off down the muddy

road. They trudged along in silence, but it was hard going and the rain beat so that talking was impossible. It seemed to Janet as though it were raining both ways, for the drops hit the hard adobe clay with such force that they spattered up again almost to the height of a person.

She lost sight of all direction but Peter seemed to know the way. He put out his hand, when they had gone about half a mile, and she took it, glad to feel the assurance that it gave her. It took them a long time to get to the mail-boxes, though they had gone a short cut. When they came in sight of them, the rain seemed to slacken, then stopped, and before they had gone twenty yards the sun was out.

"Oh, I'm glad that's over!" Janet said thankfully, "You know, Peter, I was scared. I felt as if I were walking through the ocean."

"And that any minute you would meet a fish, I suppose," Peter laughed. "I think it was great, but I hope I didn't tire you."

"Not a bit of it," Janet replied gamely, though her back ached.

Peter got out the letters in the box, put them carefully into a dry pocket of his suit, and they started home. At the end of the first mile, they

were forced to stop and take their coats off for it was so blistering hot. Peter was showing the marks of exhaustion.

"Of all the crazy climates to live in, this is the worst," he protested. "Drenched one minute, and broiled alive the next. Well, we'll soon be out of it, and back in Old Chester."

"Will you be glad?" Janet asked.

" 'Course, if English comes along. I'm crazy to get back to my sheep," Peter suddenly stopped. "Princess, what a long way we have traveled," he remarked, apropos of nothing.

"You mean from the mail-boxes?" Janet asked innocently.

"No I don't." Peter did not notice that she was teasing. "I meant from the day that we read about sheep in the Enchanted Kingdom."

"Hush," Janet cautioned him, "that never happened. It was just a fairy tale. You and I are just real ordinary mortals only we are being bewitched, and some day we'll wake up and probably you will hear that farmer you used to live with calling you to get up, and I'll hear Hannah say, 'Miss Janet, your grandmother wants you."

Peter looked at her, "I guess we are bewitched," he said laughing. "At least, I know

I am bewitched, but it was a princess whose kingdom I happened to stumble into that bewitched me. And of course I don't know how you happened to get like that."

Janet smiled back at him. "I do," she told him, "but I'm not going to tell you."

When they reached the ranch house, they were met by Mrs. Todd and Miss Carter. "Child, what have you been up to?" Mrs Todd demanded. "Peter have you lost your reason, to take Janet out on a day like this? You both look half drowned."

"Janet, darling, you really ought to have more sense than to let Peter go out when he has not been well," Auntie Mogs put it gently.

The two culprits looked at each other, and laughed.

"Oh, well, it's not going to hurt us any," Janet replied. "I don't think Peter is any the worse for his ducking."

Peter looked a little embarrassed. It had never dawned on him that he might be tiring Janet. Somehow, Janet and tiredness did not seem compatible. "Here's the mail," he said, with a sudden smile of inspiration. It was so obviously meant to change the subject that the

rest laughed, and Miss Carter took the strapped package. They followed her into the living room, where she opened it. There was mail for Janet and Phyllis from Sally and Daphne. Peter had his share, and there was a gray envelope addressed in Miss Weatherby's precise handwriting, for Daisy.

"Oh dear!" Miss Carter sighed. "Here's another letter from Daisy's disagreeable relative. I do wish she wouldn't write her. It distresses her so."

"Any letters for me?" Daisy inquired. Miss Carter handed her the envelope. "Oh dear!" Daisy said in turn as she looked at it for a long time, without opening it. Then she handed it back to Miss Carter. "You read it, Auntie Mogs, and tell me if there is anything I really ought to know. I'm feeling much too happy to-day to be scolded for anything."

Auntie Mogs opened the envelope. Something pink fluttered to the floor. Peter dived to pick it up, and handed it, still folded, to Daisy.

CHAPTER XIX

A SURPRISE

"GOOD heavens!" cried Daisy, "it's a check for twenty thousand dollars. Quick, Auntie Mogs, what does she say?"

Auntie Mogs read the entire letter aloud:

"My dear Niece Daisy:

I have determined after serious thought to marry. The object of my affections is a very worthy man, and one whom you ought to be proud to call uncle.

However, as we are going to spend our life among the heathen, it is very improbable that you will ever have occasion to meet him.

My fortune I am dedicating to his great work, so you need have no expectations of being mentioned in my will.

I am enclosing a check for twenty thousand dollars, and I want you to understand that this is my last contribution to you and yours.

Your Aunt,
LOUISE WEATHERBY.

P. S. I trust you will use the money sensibly."

Daisy was too excited to speak, but by her wild gesticulations Janet knew that she wanted Tom,

so she dashed out to the corral where he was talking to Sulky, and grabbed him unceremoniously by the belt.

"Quick, Tom, something wildly thrilling has happened. I'm dying to tell you, but I mustn't, because Daisy wants to," and she dragged the protesting Tom into the living-room, where Daisy fell upon him, talking so fast that no one could have understood what she was talking about, and waving the check before his eyes. Tom, to quiet her, held her shoulders in the tight vice of his arm. Then he took away the pink check, and examined it. It was his turn now to be excited.

"Well, whatever possessed her to do that? Tommy Junior?" he inquired.

"No, read the letter," Daisy insisted, and she held it tremblingly under Tom's nose.

He read it, and burst out laughing. "So you are disinherited in favor of the heathen. My poor child!" he said, and grinned. "Well, what are you going to do about it, send it back?"

"I should say I was not!" Daisy denied heartily. "She has plenty of money, and I am sure the heathen will not miss this. You shall have the new barns you wanted, and," she jumped up suddenly, her eyes flashing with joy, "it's my

very own money, and I can start my school with it! And the Twins shall have anything they want and Auntie Mogs and I shall go to Chicago and buy clothes, and, and, and what's left we'll put in the bank for Tommy."

Tom shouted. "Do you expect to have anything left after that wild time?" he inquired. "But it's your money, my dear, and you shall do with it exactly as you want."

Daisy looked at him seriously for a minute. "Then I'll give it all to you, Tommy, if you'll just leave me enough to start the school."

"My dear, you can start twenty schools," Tom laughed indulgently, "and you can go on the trip to Chicago with Auntie Mogs, but I refuse to have you squandering your money on those twin sisters of mine, because there's nothing that they need that their indulgent aunt hasn't already bought them."

"Oh, Tom, what a dreadful way to talk!" Daisy protested. "The Twins shall have anything they want. Why, I heard Janet just the other day saying she would love to have a pack of bloodhounds."

The shout that followed this remark was so

loud that it brought Phyllis in from English's room.

"Do hush!" she said, "Tommy is asleep on Ding's bed, and you'll wake him up. Why, what is the matter?" she asked, as she looked at each one of their faces.

Daisy told her, and the first thing Phyllis said was, "Oh, Daisy, now you can start that school. Let's ride out this very afternoon, and see what is to be done first."

"Trust Phyllis," Tom laughed, "for starting something. It's always the way. Everybody else theorizes, but Phyl gets to work at once on something practical."

"Oh, Tom, what a horrible reputation to give me!" Phyllis protested, but Daisy insisted that it was the only sensible thing she had heard.

The next week was a busy one. Daisy's old home was being enlarged and made comfortable for the host of children who would take advantage of it. The boys of the ranch had volunteered their services, and every spare hour found them hammering at the new building, while Daisy slaved in the kitchen with José, to make every meal surpass the last.

Into the midst of these preparations rode Rusty Savage one day, hot and dusty, but as lean, lanky and laconic as ever. Janet saw him first, but she had barely recognized him before her eyes rested on the bright and shiny sheriff's badge that he was wearing. Rusty was off his horse, and beside her in an instant. With pardonable pride he puffed out his chest.

"Thought I'd come around and see how you're getting on," he said. "My business is bringing me over here, as you might say."

"Why, Rusty, whatever has happened to you? Are you really and truly a policeman?" Janet inquired.

"Well, I don't figger to be called a policeman exactly," Rusty replied, a little huffed; "but the County has just voted me sheriff. The last man we had was a no count, and the train robberies along the line lately have called for action, and that's me."

It was just dinner time, and Janet dragged Rusty into the dining-room, and announced him with a great flourish. "Sheriff Rusty Savage!" she called from the doorway. "Stand up everybody and give three rousing cheers!" and Rusty, very much embarrassed, but as pleased as a child

at being patted on the back, slouched into the room.

"Evenin' Tom, evenin' madam" to Miss Carter, and a general smile that took in the rest of the table. He shook hands with Daisy. "Girl," he said solemnly, "it's a real treat to see you looking so happy and pertlike. I must tell Agatha."

Dinner progressed, and they heard all Rusty's news. However, he did not see fit to inform them that he had, that afternoon, caught a train robber in a hand-to-hand encounter, that would have done credit to a prize-fighter. That was merely following out his instructions, which had been to get the man. And Rusty never made a fuss about a simple little thing like following out instructions.

"You all sure do live high!" he exclaimed, as he passed his plate for the third helping of roast beef; "red meat in the middle of the week. I'd better not tell Agatha. She sure would be shocked."

This brought the conversation around to Daisy's inheritance, and the boys explained how just because they were doing a little extra work, they were living on the fat of the land.

"Oh, Tom," Daisy said suddenly. "I've got the very idea! All those men in Loophole have been so disagreeable about my school that I wouldn't think of asking them to open it next week. So I'm going to make Rusty do the honors."

"Oh now, Daisy," Rusty protested. "I never was no good at speech making, Agatha can tell you that."

"Get Miss Agatha to tell you what to say," Tom suggested.

"And bring her over with you," Miss Carter added. "Surely, she can leave the ranch for one night," and so it was decided.

Rusty spent the evening talking to English, who was, of course, the center of attraction for miles around; for none of the outfit of the Twin Star had stunted their speech when it came to recounting his bravery.

The next week, the school was opened. Miss Agatha arrived in a black alpaca dress, and radiated good humor on everybody. Tommy Junior took the most violent fancy to her, and refused to budge from her ample lap. Miss Agatha played new and wonderful games with

him, and for days after her departure he wept for her.

Rusty stood up before the gathering, which was a large one, and prepared to say his speech, which had been carefully taught him by Miss Agatha. The half that he had not forgotten he started to mumble. There was a titter in the audience, and it might have been disastrous for Rusty's pride had not a providential shower at that moment descended upon them, sending them all to the nearest shelter.

When the sun came out, it was decided to omit the speech, and amid cheers that were deafening the American flag was raised high on the flag pole above the school-house.

"It was a thorough success. I never enjoyed myself so much in all my life," Mrs. Todd announced that night in the living-room. "I do think Miss Agatha is a most wonderful woman. She asked me to come over and see her, and I am going."

Daisy was flushed and happy, but tired. "I'm glad everybody had a good time, and I do think the strawberry ice cream was nice, even though it did come all the way by train."

"I'll say it was," Circus Bailey was sitting on the floor, building a house for Tommy's edification next morning.

"I do hope the children will come to school," Auntie Mogs said doubtfully, "but Daisy, I do like the little girl you picked out as school mistress. She seems to love the children."

"What are you going to do next, dear?" Tom inquired.

Daisy was sitting on the arm of his chair, and he pressed his dark head against her golden one. Daisy looked about the room, and then smiled mysteriously. "I suppose you and Auntie Mogs will be going to Chicago," he suggested.

"No," Daisy shook her head. "I've got a better scheme than that. You and Tommy Junior and I are going to Old Chester with them when they go." And though nothing was said about it, every one understood that she meant that they were going for the two weddings.

Janet and Phyllis exchanged swift glances, and then they both smiled and blushed a little.

At that same moment, Peter, who was sitting on the edge of English's bed, where he was supposed to be talking sheep was, in reality, discussing the same subject.

CHAPTER XX

THE POP PICNIC

THE summer was drawing to a close, although everybody at the Twin Stars was doing his best to make it last as long as possible, and each night there was the feeling that the day had gone all too fast.

Peter had so far recovered that he had forgotten that he had ever been ill, and English was on the mend. The doctor had unfortunately suggested that perhaps the scars from the horse's hoofs would be permanent, and the suggestion had filled English with anguish. How marry Phyllis, if he was to be a sight to turn from all the days of his life! No, in spite of Tom, who did not argue too strongly for he understood, he would wait until he could see for himself.

But the day had at last arrived. The doctor came in the morning, and English was given a mirror by Phyllis.

"As if it mattered whether you were scarred or not," she said laughing. "Goodness, if I had done what you had, I should want to bear the marks of it all my life."

English took the mirror and put it face down on the bed.

"Please leave me with the doctor," he said. He had not watched his own progress from day to day, as the wounds were dressed, and the wily doctor had not told him anything much one way or the other.

When the door closed on Phyllis and Auntie Mogs, he lifted the glass, and without a word the doctor took off the thin gauze dressing.

"There now, man, look at the little thing you have been making all this fuss about," he said and laughed.

English looked. His face was not a pretty sight, for he was sadly in need of a shave, but the cut itself had left a scar no larger than a slip of the morning razor would make.

"Hum," English heaved a mighty sigh of relief. "It hasn't added any to my beauty, but its not half bad.'

"You are an ingrate," the doctor remarked. "Wouldn't you rather have a scar on your face,

than to limp for the rest of your days? And that you will do, I'm afraid, for your broken hip has mended none too well."

English laughed. "Never mind the limp, Doc.," he said, "it doesn't matter, as Peter reminded me, in raising sheep."

"And does a scar matter?" the doctor asked chuckling. "I never heard of a sheep being upset by the looks of a homely man."

English considered a moment in silence. "No," he admitted; "but there are other considerations besides sheep."

The doctor laughed gruffly. "Well if it's Miss Phyllis, you're not half good enough for her, but I wish you luck, though upon my soul how you can tell her from her twin, I for one don't see. The only way I know her is by the adoring glances she gives you. I hope you have a surer way to tell than that."

"Rather," English exclaimed. "I couldn't confuse her if she had a dozen twins. But cut along, there's a good man, and find one of the boys to shave me. My arm is a bit weak still," and he grinned at his own impatience.

The doctor went out laughing and Phyllis who was standing near the door, knew it was all right.

A few minutes later she saw Tommy go by with shaving things. He was whistling.

"I vote we have a picnic, to celebrate English's recovery," Peter said next day, and his suggestion was met with enthusiasm.

"Yes, and I reckon it will be quite a picnic, something we'll all of us remember a long time," Jim drawled and Screw Williams nodded.

"You mean, that the root beer isn't all that's agoin' to pop?" Circus inquired.

"Well something like that," Jim replied and derived the greatest possible amusement from Peter's unexpected but violent blush.

"What were they talking about?" Janet inquired innocently as she and Peter rode for the mail a little later.

"Princesses and little girls should never be curious," Peter chided, "and when you are a Princess *and* a little girl too, it's very bad."

"Peter Gibbs, do you know there are times when I positively hate you!" Janet exclaimed.

"Hating, when only indulged in now and again, is very beneficial to the circulation," Peter told her.

"I'll beat you to the mail-box, for that," Janet threatened and off she flew on Booster.

Peter was riding a much larger horse with longer legs, so that the race was hardly fair. He reached the mail-box several yards ahead of Janet, and waited for her with a smile of triumph.

"Hurry, dear, or you'll be late, and I can't wait all day for you," he teased.

Janet could only be angry or laugh, and being Janet she chose the latter.

"Peter, you are maddening," she said finally.

"But you like me just the same, don't you, Princess?" he asked with an eager note in his voice.

"Of course I do," Janet replied, without a shade of embarrassment.

"Good enough," replied Peter.

"Hullo, English has a letter from London, and a black border on the envelope, too. Hope it's not bad news. Here's another one, from 'Clark and Clark, Solicitors?' "

"It sounds rather bad," Janet said. "I hope it doesn't mean that he has to go back to England."

"Why?" Peter demanded.

"Because of Phyl, stupid," Janet replied with a toss of her head.

"Does Phyl really like him, do you think?" asked the guileless Peter.

"Like him,—really Peter for a grown man, you are sometimes very dumb."

"Thanks awfully, but you are not answering my question."

"And I don't intend to, either."

"Oh, very well," and Peter wheeled his horse and started for home.

"Well I never!" Janet was astonished and then she was hurt. Instead of following Peter, she wheeled Booster around and started off in the other direction.

It was a glorious day and she rode on and on, revisiting all the places that were always present in her memory.

It was supper time before she headed the tired Booster for home. Peter met her half-way to the ranch.

"Look here, Jan," he greeted her; "to be peevish is one thing, but to frighten me to death is another. Where have you been all afternoon?"

Janet ignored the question and replied politely, "I am sorry if I caused them any worry at home."

"I didn't say you had," Peter denied. I said

I had been worried. They are much too excited about English's good news."

"What news?" Janet demanded, forgetting she was angry.

"I've a good mind not to tell you."

"Oh, but you will, if I say I am sorry."

"Well, but are you?"

"Awfully, I'll even apologize." Janet however looked far more impish than penitent.

"Well, old English got a letter from home, and it seems that he is first cousin, or was, to a very wealthy man, not a duke or anything, but a landed proprietor, and the old gentleman died and he is the boss now."

"Oh, Peter, how slangy you are!" Janet chided. "You mean, English is the owner?"

"Yes, madam, just that and he will have buckets of money."

"And I suppose he will go and live in England, and we will never see him again."

"He'll do no such thing. The first thing he did was to grab my hand, and say, 'Well, old top, we can have the highest fences in the country now, and if we get tired of America for a pasture we can try our hand at Southdown mutton'—so, he doesn't intend to go at all."

"Thank Goodness!" Janet spoke with feeling. She had been thinking of Phyllis.

"And, oh, I forgot to tell you, we are having a picnic to-night, in the south pasture. Tom and Uncle Pete are going to carry English to the car. The Doc says it will do him good. We're to ride straight back, but there's no hurry." However Peter sounded rather impatient.

"Good, let's go the long way then," Janet suggested.

Peter looked about him. "Let's sit and rest awhile here, first," he said. "I'm sort of tired."

"Oh, Peter, you have been doing too much," Janet was concerned in an instant. "You are really not as strong as you think."

Peter only smiled by the way of reply, and jumped off his horse. Janet slid into his arms and he held her there.

"Jan, when are you going to tell me seriously that you love me?" he asked tenderly.

"Why, Peter, what are you talking about?" Janet was completely surprised.

"Well, you know you are going to marry me some day, and—" Peter floundered for words, "I kind of wanted to hear you say it."

Janet pushed a little away from him and looked

up, her eyes as big as saucers. "Peter, are you proposing to me?" she demanded.

"Yes, Princess," Peter said very tenderly; "And please say, yes," he pleaded.

"But—but you haven't even told me that you love me, though I suppose you do," Janet replied wonderingly.

"Love you!" Peter exclaimed. "Why, Princess, I loved you the minute I saw you, when I looked down at you from the roof of the Enchanted Kingdom!"

"And dropped the tin on my nose," Janet laughed. "I don't believe you."

"Say you love me, and I'll prove it," Peter commanded.

Janet tilted her head back and looked at him for a full minute. "Yes, Peter, I do love you," she whispered. "I think I always have."

Peter folded her in his arms and kissed her gently.

"Look!" he said a few minutes later, and he pulled an old wallet out of his pocket and showed her its contents—an old pair of gloves—the very pair in fact that had always lain on the table in the Enchanted Kingdom, and that had disappeared with Peter.

Janet looked at them and smiled softly to herself. Then they mounted their horses and rode slowly in the direction of the south pasture.

"I say, Tom, do you suppose you can fix it so that I could have a minute alone with Phyl?" English asked anxiously, as Tom settled him comfortably on the army cot they had brought for him.

"You bet," Tom nodded understandingly, and joined the others who were busy around the supper baskets.

"Let's have supper down here," he suggested. "It's less apt to be windy, and I hate sand in my food."

"How about English?" Daisy inquired

"We'll bring him down later," Tom replied. "Just at present he is sleepy and tired and I think he ought to be off by himself."

The rest accepted his explanation without demur and moved the lunch baskets.

Tom had time to whisper hurriedly to Phyllis, "English wants you to do something for him." Phyllis nodded and left the others and climbed up beside English's cot.

"Are you awfully tired?" she asked gently.

"Tom said I could do something for you, what is it?"

English possessed himself of one of her hands and looked at her for a long time.

"Yes," he said at last. "You can do something for me, Phyl, if you will."

"But of course I will."

"Don't make any rash promises."

"Nonsense, what is it?"

"It's to make me the happiest man in the world. Will you do that?"

"But how can I?" Phyllis asked simply.

"I love you, dear, and you can make me indescribably happy by saying that you love me."

"Love you!" Phyllis spoke scornfully and for the fraction of a second English despaired. "Why, I adore you, my dear, and—and—I thought you didn't love me."

"Thought I—oh, my darling, what utter nonsense!" English laughed in his relief and joy, and with his strong arm he encircled her shoulders and kissed her golden brown hair.

After their great happiness the Twins had a moment of depression. Janet thought, "What will Phyl say?" and Phyllis wondered, "Will

Jan be sorry," But they were not in doubt long.

"Where's English and Phyl?" Peter demanded, as he and Janet got off their horses and joined the others.

Phyllis from the rock above heard them and called down, "Here we are."

Peter pulled Janet after him and hurried up to them.

"Allow me to present the future Mrs. Gibbs," he announced joyfully.

Before Phyllis could reply, English said, "I am sure the future Mrs. Kedgeree is delighted to meet her."

"Jan, is it true?"

"Phyl, is it true?" the Twins said together.

Nothing would have been said at supper, for the two couples were still a little embarrassed at their new happiness, and did not want to be teased. However the "wise laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley" and just as they were congratulating themselves that no one knew, Tommy Junior who was staying up because Mrs. Todd had begged so hard to have him, announced between mouthfuls—

"Everybody's tissing to-night. I saw Ding tiss Phyl, and Peter tissed and hugged Jan bof of

'em dot tissed. I suppose 'cause vey're twinses."

A hearty laugh greeted his announcement, and there was all the good-natured teasing in the world after that, and strangely enough none of them seemed to mind even a little bit.

Before Janet went to bed that night she went to the drawer of her wardrobe trunk and took out something that was wrapped in tissue paper, then she went out and called softly to Peter.

"You're not the only one who has a souvenir," she whispered shyly, and put the package into his hand and disappeared.

Peter went back to his room. By the light of the lamp he unwrapped it, and found the piece of tin that had dropped on Janet's nose the day of their first meeting.

CHAPTER XXI

CONCLUSION

AND so Janet and Phyllis make their bow and bid all those who loved them the fondest good-byes. They hope that they will never go out entirely from the minds of their friends, but will remain as a pleasant memory and one that will cause happiness whenever it is turned over in the dusty cupboards of their recollections.

As to their future, it is left in good hands and may be safely said to be a happy one. They will always be together, that is certain, and although they will have different names they will always be known to those who love them by the title they loved best, "The Page Twins."

THE END

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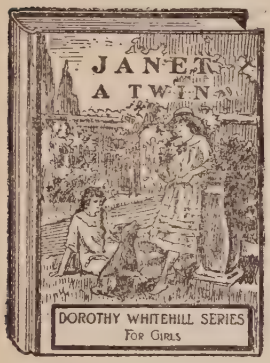

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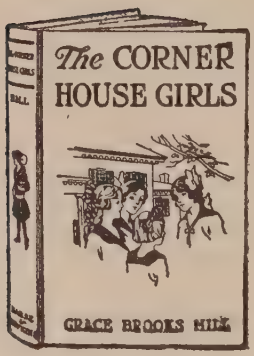

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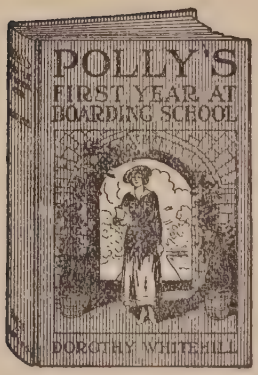

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